

PLUCK AND LUCK

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NEW YORK, MAY 20, 1903.

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THE MERRY TEN; OR, THE SHADOWS OF A SOCIAL CLUB.

By JNO. B. DOWD.



Suddenly, with a wild yell Jenkins sprang upon the table among the dishes and bottles. The next moment he half crouched, and gazed towards a half opened door, as though his very soul was in his eyes. A deathly pallor o'erspread his features.

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By Jno. B. Dowd.

*H. K. Shackleford,
1879.*

CHAPTER I.

THE MERRY TEN AND THEIR VISITORS.

"Come, fellows, who's going?"

"Going where?"

"For a cruise about town."

"Oh, there's plenty of time for that. Fill up again, and let's give them a parting bumper."

"Good—good—fill up again, fellows! A toast—a toast!"

"Well, here's to our visiting friends from over the river. May their club live forever, and each individual member flourish like a green bay tree."

The toast was drunk standing, followed by a hearty round of applause.

It was on the occasion of a visit from the Garrick club, of Brooklyn, to the Merry Ten, of New York. The Merry Ten had received them in their elegant rooms on Sixth avenue, with a generous welcome, where the evening was passed in social intercourse. Songs, speeches and rare flashes of wit ruled the hour. A splendid supper was also given, the table fairly groaning under the load of good things.

The Merry Ten never failed to show a generous hospitality on such occasions. They had determined to make the visit of the Garricks one to be long remembered by them. Both clubs were composed of wealthy young men, all belonging to families well known in the two great cities.

They sat at the tables nearly three hours, eating, drinking, singing, speaking, and passing jokes and bon mots around, as merry a party as ever assembled. Harry Wilson then proposed, as late as the hour was, to take the visitors out for a walk through several of the noted thoroughfares of the city. But Sam Jenkins, another well-known member of the Merry Ten, proposed that they give the Garricks another bumper, which was given with a will.

"Once more to the breach, my braves!" called the president of the Garricks. "Let us return that toast and bumper before we go."

"Yes, yes! Fill them up!" cried a dozen voices at once.

"Here's to the Merry Ten!" cried the leader of the visiting club. "May they live and prosper to the fruition of their hopes, and last, but not least, may their pluck and purse never fail them."

"Amen!"

"Drink her down!"

"Here's a tiger!"

"Order! Order, gentlemen!" cried Charlie Pelton, the president of the Merry Ten. "It's now time for us to go with our visiting friends to the places we have suggested; but before we go we will have a song from Harry Wilson, who is the sweet warbler of the club."

"Wilson—Wilson! Song—song!" chorused the entire party. Harry Wilson had a splendid baritone voice, and was one of the favorites of the club.

He rose to his feet to respond to the demand for a song, when some one cried out:

"Get up on a chair!"

"Put him on the table!" cried another.

"I may move to lay him under the table!" said Sam Jenkins, who was slightly the worse for the generous wine he had drunk, at which there was a generous roar of laughter at Harry's expense.

"My son," said Harry, laying his hand upon Jenkins' head, "I think you had better go to bed. Late hours are not good for one so young and tender as you."

"All right, (hic) old man," said Jenkins. "Jes' wait (hic) I put a brick (hic) in your hat." And snatching a hat from the hook on the wall, which chanced to be there, he smashed it down on Harry's head until it rested over his eyes and ears. It was a new silk tile, but it was ruined forever as a hat.

"Now warble away, (hic) old man!" said Sam, seating himself in the midst of a roar.

Undaunted by the comical situation, Harry pushed up the hat just high enough to get a peep at his surroundings. The wine he had drank was beginning to tell on him. As he stood on a chair it was quite difficult for him to keep his balance, at which a number laughed, and cried out:

"Brace up, old man!"

"Hug yourself!"

"Take a tumble!"

"See here, young fellows," said Harry, looking around with an amusing assumption of dignity, "if you want to hear me warble just keep quiet."

"Oh, you've got the double wabbles now!" cried Jenkins.

"Oh, dry up, Sam!" exclaimed Pelton, the president of the Merry Ten.

"I am dry," said Sam, emptying a glass of wine and dropping into his seat again, too full to stand.

Harry cleared his throat and commenced to sing.

"My grandfather's clock was—"

"That settles it!" roared Sam, falling off the chair on to the floor. "Bury me (*hic*) under the flagstones, (*hic*) and see that my (*hic*) grave's kept clean!"

The roar that greeted the interruption drowned the song so completely that Harry ceased singing and joined in the laughter, which lasted several minutes, other remarks being made that kept up the hilarity.

"By George!" exclaimed Arthur DeForrest, after a pause, looking down at Sam as he lay prostrate on the carpet. "I believe we will have to bury him; for he seems really and truly dead—drunk!"

And so he was.

He was sweetly sleeping the sleep of the man that tarries too long at the wine cup.

"Cerberus!" called Charlie Pelton, the Merry Ten's president, and the stalwart janitor of the clubhouse came forward.

"Take care of Sam, there. He's gone under!"

Cerberus stooped over the prostrate young man and took him up in his arms with as much ease as though he was only a boy of ten, and started out of the room with him.

"Hold on there, Cerb!" cried Harry Wilson, resting one foot on the table, and the other on a chair, "let me (*hic*) look upon his noble face once (*hic*) more. I ne'er shall see his like again. Alas, poor Sam! How art the (*hic*) mighty fallen!" and then with an inimitable air of sadness, sang:

"Bury him deep where the willows weep,
And the thistletoe climbs its way.
Where all the frogs cry when the ponds get dry,
Send, oh, send us a rainy day."

Chorus.

"For, oh, he'll never get drunk,
He'll never get drunk,
He'll never get drunk,
He'll never get drunk any more.
He'll never get drunk,
He'll never get drunk,
He'll never get drunk any more."

The entire party joined in the chorus with tremendous energy. Cerberus then left the room with a smile of triumph on his face, bearing Sam Jenkins, helpless, to a room on the floor above.

"Come, now! Who's going?" cried Simcoe Layton, lighting a cigar, and leading the way out of the dining room into the reception room. The entire party followed in the gayest spirits imaginable. Hats, canes and overcoats were quickly appropriated, and in a few minutes the entire party, with the presidents of the two clubs arm in arm, sallied out on the street. Each member of the Merry Ten took charge of a visitor, and followed, two by two, down the street. Some twenty odd men marching along one of the main thoroughfares of the city at that late hour of the night could not fail to

attract attention. People turned out of their way to gaze after them. At last one of the party struck up a song in which they all joined with hearty good will.

"Here, you fellows, stop that racket!" cried a stalwart policeman, anxious to do something that would get his name in the papers, "or I will run you all in!"

"Great Jehosophat!" exclaimed Simcoe Layton, "did you hear the monster, fellows?" and the entire party crowded around the policeman to laugh and jeer at him.

"I say, mister, ain't your face and buttons made of the same stuff?" asked DeForrest, timidly.

"I'll run you in!" angrily retorted the officer, seizing him by the collar, and shaking his club over his head. But the next moment the officer found himself minus club and hat. They had been snatched from him in the twinkling of an eye.

But he held on to Arthur with grim determination.

"Shake me loose, fellows!" said Arthur, who was a mere child in the officer's arms.

Suddenly two of the Garrick club members seized an ash barrel, and emptied its contents over the head and shoulders of the officer, giving him a coat of dull ashen gray, and raising a cloud of dust that nearly suffocated the entire party.

"Ugh! Ah, the devil take you!" gasped the policeman, nearly strangled by the dust, releasing his prisoner to rub his eyes. The party took to their heels and ran up to the next corner, where they turned toward Broadway, leaving the unfortunate policeman to be led back to the station to have his eyes cleaned out.

On their way they seized ash barrels and hurled them into the street, raising clouds of dust.

One of the party ran up the steps of an aristocratic looking mansion and rang the doorbell.

"Who's there?" asked a voice from the upper window.

"Your son—dead drunk!" replied one of the Merry Ten, "and we've brought him home to keep him out of the hands of the po—"

"That's a lie! I haven't any son!" angrily interrupted the night-capped head of the family, "and if you don't clear out I'll have you in the hands of the police."

"It's your nephew, then!" said DeForrest. "Come down and—"

"Go away, I tell you," said the night-cap. "I have no nephew."

"It's your uncle, then."

"Or your grandfather," said another.

"Or your grandson."

A shrill whistle was heard on the corner below.

"Come away, fellows," said Charlie Pelton, "the cops are coming."

The entire party again locked arms and marched decorously along the street. At the next corner five policemen came up and ordered them to halt.

"What's the meaning of this?" sternly demanded Pelton of the officers.

"You've been playing some pretty wild pranks to-night, gentlemen," said the sergeant in command, "and you'll find it doesn't pay to make dumping grounds of policemen's heads in this city. You must go with us to the station."

"We've done nothing to be arrested for," said Pelton, "therefore we decline to go with you. Come on, boys!"

The party made a rush, knocked down one of the police and put the others to flight. Seeing an empty street car coming up the street, they all crowded into it and rode uptown, where they got out, visited several saloons, drank wine, sang songs, and made merry until a very late hour.

Out on the streets again they caught an obfuscated son of Erin, got a long cord, tied him around the waist, and fastened the other end to the knob of a doorbell of a brownstone resi-

dence. His attempts to get away alarmed the household, who charged on the innocent Italian, and engaged in a pitched battle with him. But the news of their exploits now began to be known to the police, so, at the suggestion of Pelton, the president of the Merry Ten, they all separated, and wended their ways to their various homes mutually pleased with the enjoyments of the evening.

CHAPTER II.

THE ACCIDENT.

One of the many duties of the stalwart janitor for the Merry Ten was to take up the members from under the table as fast as they succumbed to the influence of the generous wine, and carry them to their respective rooms upstairs. That was one—he had many others. He was master over all when the club was in liquor. He was charged to preserve the peace within the sacred precincts of the building, hence; he frequently had to seize and carry off by force some of the members who showed a disposition to fight with somebody. This his great personal strength enabled him to do with the greatest ease.

On one occasion he had half of the Merry Ten to conquer before order could be restored, as they resisted and fought him like madmen. But he handled them as a rattler handles rats in a pit—literally cleaned them out in about two minutes. The next day the Merry Ten resolved that the process was too summary and voted to dismiss him.

When informed of their action Cerberus smiled grimly, shook his head, and said:

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but I can't go."

"The devil you can't!" exclaimed the astonished committee-man.

"The devil I won't!" said Cerberus, more emphatically.

"And why not, if I may ask?"

"Because I know too much about you Merry Tens," was the given reply.

And so he did.

They never discharged him.

But to our story.

On leaving the room with Sam Jenkins on the night of the reader's introduction to the Merry Ten, Cerberus carried him upstairs to an elegantly furnished room, where he deposited him on a lounge. He left him there to sleep off the fumes of the wine he had imbibed, and returned below to see the visitors and their entertainers off. The entire party soon left, and the house was left alone with Cerberus and poor Sam.

"This here Merry Ten club is the jolliest crew I ever met with," he muttered, as he proceeded to see that everything was right. "They just leave things laying around loose, and then run after me when they get lost. Wild! I never did see such another crowd! I guess as how most every man has done something in his life that he's ashamed of—these Merry Ten fellows have, I know. Drunk! Every man of them gets too full every once in awhile, and then I have my hands full."

Talking and muttering to himself, Cerberus closed the front door and then went back upstairs to attend to Sam Jenkins. He found him in a very restless state. By a liberal use of soda water and hartshorn Cerberus succeeded, after a time, in partially sobering him. But it was long past midnight before he was sufficiently sobered to walk straight.

He walked about the room awhile, and then went downstairs into the dining room to view the wreck of the supper.

"By George!" he muttered, as he viewed the empty bottles and glasses, "we gave those Garrick fellows a good blowout,

I'm vexed with myself for taking so much, because it isn't just the thing to get drunk nowadays."

Sam was a tall, fine looking young man, and his family being very wealthy, he occupied a splendid position in society. But with all his wealth, the elder Jenkins was a very practical kind of a man. He had been trying for a long time to persuade Sam to go into business with a friend of his by the name of Grimes. But the business was such that Sam declined to go into it, thinking it would degrade him in polite society. His father then cut off his supply of money in order to drive him into accepting his plans.

But Sam was not thus to be driven from the Merry Ten club and polite society. He borrowed money from his friends, and kept up with the best of them until he was quite deeply in debt to some of the members.

He was thinking of his situation.

His purse was empty. The monthly dues of the club would fall due in a few days, when each member was to pay up.

"Out upon this confounded pickle," he muttered to himself, as he stepped before a full length mirror and adjusted his cravat. "That confounded business would ruin me if I would go into it, and if I don't pay my dues and the money I have borrowed I will be expelled from the club. It is social death either way. Hang it, can't the governor comprehend the situation? I'll have a plain talk with him to-morrow, for I've got to get a cool thousand from some place or other."

Just then Cerberus entered the room with a bottle of wine in his hand.

"Give me a pull at that, Cerb," said Sam, "and then let me out. I am going home."

Cerberus handed him the bottle.

He took a good drink from it.

"Are you sure you are straight enough to go, sir?" Cerberus asked.

"Plenty straight," said Sam. "Besides, the fresh air will revive me all right."

The janitor took a key from his pocket, led the way to the front door, opened it and permitted Jenkins to pass through. Gazing after the young man for a moment, he shook his head, then noiselessly closed the door and went back upstairs with the bottle of wine in his hand.

Out in the cool night air Sam Jenkins bared his head to the gentle breeze that swept over the great city from the ocean, and seemed to feel better. But his blood was yet burning from the heavy potations. His fevered brow grew cooler as he walked along uptown, though his mind was far from being calm and collected. His financial condition engrossed his entire attention.

"If I only had a thousand dollars," he muttered, "I could pay up and thus make my credit good for five times the amount. The old man won't give it to me, however, unless I give him my promise to go into that business with Grimes. Why the deuce can't rich men give their sons a competence at once without forcing them to—na—"

His soliloquy was cut short in a trice.

He had stepped on the cover of a coal hole which, being out of order in some way, tilted up, and let him slip through like a flash.

He alighted upon an immense coal heap unharmed, but quite terrified by the accident, the suddenness of which dazed him for a moment.

"This is awful!" he said, the moment he could collect his thoughts. "It's as dark as Egypt. I can't see my hand before my face. How the devil am I to get out of this pickle without being shot and captured as a burglar? Ah, here's a match in my vest pocket—several of them. Maybe I can find my way out without being seen. What a joke this would be with the Merry Ten if they only knew it. Ah, now I can see—

yes, I am down in the cellar of somebody's house—there's the steps that lead to the basement. I hope it isn't locked."

Jenkins cautiously ascended the narrow stairs that led from the cellar to the basement, and tried the latch.

It yielded to his touch, and he entered the hallway just as his match went out, leaving him in total darkness.

"Confound it," he muttered. "I wish I was out of this. If they hear me I will be taken for a burglar and filled full of shot. I'll light another match and go out of the basement door there."

Striking another match, he tripped forward to the basement door and tried the lock. Alas, it was locked, barred and bolted!

The key was taken out of the lock.

"Thunder and blazes!" he muttered. "I am locked in as sure as fate. This is some wealthy man's house who sees that everything is secure before he retires, and the sooner I get out the better."

He stood there gazing at the keyless lock, as if uncertain what to do.

Suddenly he found himself again in darkness.

His match had burned out.

"I'll go into the dining room and go through the window," he said, and striking another match, he proceeded through the half-opened door into the dining room. Everything there betrayed the opulence of the owner.

"The devil!" he gasped, as he quickly glanced at one of the windows and looked out. "They are barred on the outside. What am I to do? Ah, I will secure a light anyhow." And espousing a small lamp on the mantel over the fireplace, he quickly applied a match to it.

It was his last match.

The lamp gave forth a bright light that revealed to him every object in the room. The closet doors stood ajar, in which he saw the glitter of silverware in great profusion.

"What a haul for a burglar," thought Jenkins, as he glared at the glistening plate. "If it were only cash, I might be attempted to appropriate it. But to take that and run to the pawnshops would, in the end, lead to detection and ruin. No—no—I won't take it. I only want to get out of this pickle, and then to-morrow I'll come around here and astonish this family by telling them how I went through the house while they all slept. Now, I must go upstairs as softly as I can, and—Good God! Who can that be? Somebody has just come in the front door!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MURDER.

The unmistakable tread of a heavy man was heard overhead, and the next moment a woman's voice timidly asking:

"It's you, is it, John?"

"Yes, Martha," replied a manly voice. "Come down into the dining room. I'm as hungry as a wolf, and have something to say to you."

"I'll be down in a moment, John," said the woman.

"Great hewgags!" gasped Sam Jenkins, looking wildly about the room, "they are coming down here! Where shall I hide? I know from his voice that he is a big double-fisted fellow, who would pound me into a jelly if he caught me here. I'll get into that closet over there."

Leaving the lamp burning upon the mantel, Sam darted to one of the closets, and esconced himself in it just as a large, portly, middle-aged man entered the room, bearing in his right hand a leathered covered case or money box.

"Ah, Annie left the lamp burning!" muttered the man. "She always would have a light she can carry about in her hand."

He struck a match, lit the gas, and then blew out the lamp. He stood where Sam Jenkins could see him from his place of concealment in the closet. He was a handsome, well-dressed man whose very appearance denoted the man of wealth.

A woman in white glided into the room, clad in a long white nightgown, and white slippers.

"What kept you so late, John?" she asked, gliding up to his side, and throwing her arms about his neck.

"Business, dear, at the bank," replied the husband, for such he was. "The bank is in a snarl, caused by some forged drafts from Chicago. We have been up all night examining the matter. I thought it best that your money and jewels should be drawn out and deposited in another bank, so I brought them home with me. They are here in this box, some fifty thousand dollars, and all your diamonds that you are not using."

"Why, John!" exclaimed the young wife. "Was it not dangerous to bring so much money through the streets at night?"

"Yes, but I came in a carriage all right, you see."

"But why did you not wait until to-morrow, John?"

"Because I have to leave for Chicago in an hour from now, to settle the matter with the banks there; and I know not what might happen before I get back. You must take them to the Chemical bank to-morrow yourself."

"Oh, I shall never rest easy with so much money in the house," said the wife, tremblingly.

"Oh, no one knows anything about it," said the husband, laughingly kissing her. "Give me some supper, and then put the box in your trunk until morning—it's almost morning now," looking at his watch. "There is no danger."

The wife opened the other closet door and took from the shelf a covered dish in which she had placed her husband's supper, and set it on the table before him. He sat down and ate heartily, his wife, looking demure and pretty in her nightgown, sat opposite him, chatting merrily as he ate.

"When will you be back?" asked she.

"I don't know—five days, probably," he replied.

Having finished the meal, he arose, took the box in his left hand, turned the gas down low, and then followed his wife upstairs.

No sooner were they out of the dining room than Sam Jenkins crept softly out of the closet.

His face was a picture to look at.

His comrades of the Merry Ten would scarcely have known him now, so completely changed was the expression of his features.

"By all the devils!" he hissed through his clenched teeth, "that box and its contents shall be mine ere I leave this house. Fifty thousand dollars! Lord, what a sum that would be for me!"

Taking off his boots and leaving them concealed in the closet, he crept out of the room, up the stairs part of the way, far enough to see which room they entered. The front room on the second floor, just as he surmised.

He then crept back downstairs and put on his boots, determined to wait until he heard the master of the house leave. He did not have long to wait.

The heavy tread of the husband was heard, accompanied by his wife, coming downstairs to the front hall. The farewell kiss was given, the door closed, and the wife ran back upstairs to her room.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and Sam Jenkins, pistol in hand, and his handkerchief over his face as a mask, prepared to ascend the stairs.

Noiselessly he ascended and placed his hand on the door-knob. The door was unlocked.

He opened it and stepped quickly inside.

The woman was kneeling before an open trunk, placing the box of jewels and money in it.

She turned her head and glanced up at him.

She seemed stunned by his presence, turning ashen-hued, yet silent as the tomb.

"I will trouble you for that box, ma'am," said Sam, in a hoarse tone, reaching out his hand toward her.

"No, no!" she gasped, suddenly hugging the box to her bosom, "go away! I'll cry out for the po—"

"The first cry will be your last," interrupted Sam. "Give me the money and keep the jewels. I am a desperate man, and—"

He threw out his arm and caught her around the waist. She struggled violently to free herself, and in doing so tore the handkerchief from his face.

"That seals your doom, ma'am!" hissed Sam, dropping the pistol on the carpet, and drawing a knife from his pocket, which he opened with his teeth.

"Mercy! Mercy! Oh, don't kill me—don't murder me!" she cried, frantically.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried a young girlish voice in an inner room. "What's the matter? Open the door—quick!"

Sam listened attentively for a moment, and then glared into the eyes of the trembling woman he held in his arms.

"Madam, there is one chance for your life!" he whispered. "Will you do my bidding?"

"Yes, yes! Only spare my life!"

"Call me your husband! Call me by the names you call him, and I will let you go."

"Oh, husband! John, dear, don't—don't—dear—dear John!" cried the terrified woman. "Ah, John, I love you so much! Don't kill me, John!"

"Ah, that'll do," hissed Sam; and like a flash of fate, the knife severed the jugular vein in her neck.

She uttered a single groan and fell dead at his feet. Sam seized the box and glided out of the room like a specter shadow.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SQUIRMING OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

How he got out of the house, Sam Jenkins never knew. The first recollection he had of himself was when he was walking briskly along the street with the box of money and jewelry under his arm. His soul was filled with horror at what he had done, and at times he would halt and almost resolve to return to the house and give up the treasure. But the thought that it would be ruin, if not death, to do so, deterred him.

"The die is cast," he muttered, and pulling his hat down over his eyes, as if to strengthen his desperate resolve, he pushed on toward his house—the residence of his parents. "No one has seen me come out of the house, or go in either, for that matter. I will keep the wealth and say nothing about it. Ugh! I never thought I would become a murderer. Great God! I wonder if I really did kill her! I could not help it. It was her death or my ruin."

On reaching his home Sam entered the house very quietly, as was his wont, by the aid of his night key, and tripped softly to his room.

Turning on the gas, he was horrified at seeing blood on his hand, arm and legs. The sight almost sickened him.

"Oh, God!" he groaned. "What have I done?" and angrily threw the little box of treasure on the bed, sinking in a chair. "It's a woman's blood, too!"

But he did not long remain idle. He had played a desperate

game and won, and now he resolved to enjoy the fruits of it, since what had been done could not be undone.

He sprang up and rushed to the wash basin to wash the stains of blood from his hands. It was but the work of a moment. The stains still remained on his clothing.

"This must never be seen," he said, looking down at the blood-stained pants. "It will not do to burn them, as the smell of burning cloth at this hour would alarm the whole family, if not the entire block. I will send them through the waste pipe to the sewers. They can never be found or identified there."

The cunning of the devil seemed all at once to possess him. Hastily dressing himself, he took his knife, itself showing bloodstains, and cut the pants into small pieces. When the process of cutting was all finished, he gathered them up and carried them to the closet, where he dropped them, one by one, into the waste pipe, until the last rag was carried away into one of the many sewers of the great city.

"That spot I can wash out without any trouble, I think," he said, returning to his room and examining the sleeve of his coat. "At least I will try it, anyhow."

By carefully and vigorously washing his sleeve, he succeeded in removing every vestige of the stain.

"That destroys the last trace," he muttered, turning away from the wash basin. "Now for the treasure."

Eagerly seizing the box which lay on the bed, he opened it by means of the little key which he found attached to the lid.

"Ye gods, what a treasure!" he involuntarily exclaimed, as the dazzling light from the diamonds almost blinded him. They lay scattered about in the greatest confusion in the bottom of the box. Besides these there were five packages of banknotes of \$10,000 each, making a sum total of \$50,000 cash.

"Ah! This is the prize for which I have committed a crime. But the world will be none the wiser. I will move along with the Merry Ten as I have always done, quietly paying my debts and enjoy life as though the money was always subject to my demand. These jewels must be destroyed—the diamonds taken out and the gold destroyed. They can never be identified then. When the cash is all gone, then I can fall back on these precious stones."

Carefully closing the box, and placing it in his trunk, which he closed and locked, Sam Jenkins quietly rolled himself in his bed, but not to sleep.

Sleep would not come at his bidding so soon on the heels of a dreadful crime. He rolled and tossed until the light of morning shone through the windows into his room.

He arose, dressed himself, and met the family at late breakfast. His father, a man of regular habits, had eaten and gone downtown long before the son was up.

"You were out late last night, brother," said pretty Nellie, his sweet young sister, a lovely blonde of eighteen summers, as he entered the breakfast room.

"Yes, I was at the theater, and then stopped at the club a while. The night is gone before any one is aware of it."

"Yes, and the day, too, if one has pleasant companions with which to pass the time."

Sam finished the meal in silence, and then returned to his room to finish his sleep. He slept until high noon, and then arose, greatly refreshed.

To dress and go out into the great city taxed his courage to a much greater extent than he at first thought it would. He knew the murder and robbery would be the topic of conversation, and that he would be compelled to listen to the revelation of all the horrible details.

"But the die is cast!" he muttered again to himself, for the twentieth time that morning. "There is no retreat for me

now. I did not go there for that purpose. Fate was against me—tempted me, and I fell."

When he reached the first corner below the residence of his parents the first sound that fell upon his ears was the cry of a newsboy with an afternoon paper.

"Here, give me one!" he exclaimed, with a sort of fierce desperation.

The boy gave him a copy of the paper, and he turned quickly to scan its pages.

"Two cents, sir," said the newsboy, holding out a dirty hand for the price of the paper.

"Eh? What's that?"

"I want two cents for that paper, and no questions asked!" replied the boy, pertly.

"Why, didn't I pay you for it? I thought I did," said Sam, searching his pockets for the change.

"Oh, that's two thin," said the boy. "Give us the paper or the pennies."

"By George, I haven't a cent of change," said Sam, "just then remembering that he had changed his clothes that morning without transferring his change."

The lad only grinned, and held out his hand for the money.

"Come back to the house with me," said Sam, turning squarely around and retracing his steps. "I forgot my change."

"Say, wot yer givin' me?" angrily retorted the lad. "Taffy on a stick? I won't have it. A man who would hook a paper would kill a woman. Give us that paper, you old snide!"

"Do you say I killed the woman?" gasped Sam, white as a ghost, dropping the paper to the ground.

"I dunno but yer did," said the boy, picking up the paper and walking off. "A snoozer that'd chisel a poor boy out of a paper would kill a woman for \$50,000 twice every night."

The next moment the boy was out of sight around the corner crying the paper, leaving Sam trembling in his boots at his thoughtless words.

"What the deuce has come over me!" said Sam, turning slowly and resuming his walk toward his home. "If I can't exercise more control than to be upset by any little newsboy on the street, I'd better travel awhile. Why, my actions would have given me away to any shrewd person. I must be more on my guard."

On returning to his room, he found the servant girl there arranging things. Even at the sight of her he started, and glanced around suspiciously.

She appeared surprised at his sudden return, and asked: "What's the matter, Mr. Sam?"

"I changed my pants without taking out my change," he replied, going to the wardrobe and taking down a pair of pants to search the pockets.

"You didn't wear those yesterday," said the girl, laughing. "I saw those hanging there when I—"

"Yes—yes; I remember now," said he, nervously. "I put them away in my trunk last night. If you will leave the room I will change these I have on."

The girl, of course, vacated the room promptly.

"What a fool I am!" hissed Sam between his teeth. "Every little incident upsets me. They will think something is the matter with me if I am not more careful," and locking the door, he quickly changed the entire suit, and took one thousand dollars from the box in his trunk. Then, carefully locking the trunk again, he sauntered out of the house in a listless, careless sort of a way, and strode off down the street.

Seeing another newsboy, he bought an afternoon paper from him, and turned to read an account of the tragedy of the night before.

"A Terrible Crime!"

was the first thing that caught his eye.

"A wife and mother murdered!"

"Mysterious disappearance of the husband and father!"

"The daughter's story!"

"Accuses her father of the foul deed!" etc., etc. All in flaming capitals, every letter of which seemed to point an accusing finger at him.

But, by a desperate effort, he read the whole story without a muscle betraying any emotion whatever, much to his gratification.

Quietly folding the paper and placing it in his pocket, he proceeded on his stroll downtown, stopping at a tobacconist's on the way to purchase some cigars.

"Why, hallo, Sam!" cried a voice behind him, followed by a familiar slap on the shoulder that caused him to spring away as though shot from a cannon.

"The devil!" exclaimed Charlie Pelton, one of the Merry Ten, dumfounded at the sudden effect of his familiar salutation of his friend. "Why, what's the matter, Jenkins?"

"Oh, is it you, Charlie?" said Sam, with a ghastly smile. "By George, what a fright you gave me!"

"Look here, Sam, that big drunk last night was too much for you. You are all unstrung. Come, let's go and have a little bottle of champagne. You will feel better then," and the two friends locked arms and went off toward Broadway.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE ACCUSATION.

On hearing her mother's cries for mercy, the little daughter in the adjoining room began crying and calling her father and mother, and pounding on the door with her clenched hands. The next moment she heard her mother pleading with her father to spare her life, and then all was silent.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried the child. "Open the door, open the door! Has papa hurt you?"

But the mother was deaf to the pleading voice of her darling.

Never again in this life would she hear that sweet sound.

Mrs. Martha Perigorde was dead in her bedchamber, and little May Perigorde was a motherless child.

But little May was so thoroughly frightened that she continued screaming at the top of her voice. After nearly half an hour, one of the chambermaids was awakened by her screams, and came down to see what ailed her. Entering her mistress' room, she beheld a sight that almost paralyzed her.

Her mistress lay weltering in her blood on the rich carpet that covered the floor.

"Murder—murder!" screamed the chambermaid, loud enough to be heard blocks away, and in a few minutes a policeman was pounding for admittance at the door.

By this time all the members of the household were screaming at the top of their voices, some of them not even knowing what they were screaming for. One of them, thinking that it was dangerous to remain in the house, ran down to the front door, opened it, and sprang out into the arms of the policeman.

"What is all this racket about?" the officer asked.

"Oh, mercy, there's murder in the house!" the terrified domestic cried.

"Well, tell me all about it," said the officer, quietly, "and then perhaps I can catch the murderer."

The result was that he was shown up to Mrs. Perigorde's room, where lay the unfortunate victim. He quickly opened the door of the inner bedroom, where little May Perigorde was confined.

The terrified little girl, a bright miss of ten years, rushed

past the officer, and threw herself on the body of her beloved mother, crying:

"Mamma, mamma, speak to me—what made papa do so?"

The officer and all the domestics were thunderstruck at the child's words.

"My little girl," he asked, taking her by the hand gently, yet firmly, "do you know who did this thing?"

"Papa did it—oh, mamma, mamma, speak to me mamma! Is mamma dead?"

"Yes, child, she is dead, and—"

A wild scream burst from the child, and she sank into a deathlike swoon by the side of her dead mother.

"Just let things remain as they are until I summon assistance," said the officer, who went down to the front stoop and pounded his club. In another minute or two an officer came running up.

"Go to the station and report a murder here in No.—, and then come back as quick as you can."

The officer sped away as fast as his heels could carry him. Very soon afterward the entire household was taken charge of by the police authorities, and the best detectives set to work to unravel the mystery of the crime. At first no one would give credence to the story given by little May, to the effect that she heard her mother screaming and begging her father to spare her life—that she loved him, and begged him not to kill her.

But the unaccountable absence of the husband and father began to excite suspicion. The fact that the murdered woman's diamonds, which she had been in the daily habit of wearing, were unmolested on the dressing case, dispelled the idea that the crime had been committed by burglars for plunder, for so far no one could miss any valuables from the room or house.

As daylight dawned the news of the terrible tragedy spread like wildfire, and hundreds of people crowded the street in front of the house.

During the day, however, one of the directors of the bank to which John Perigorde gave his services as president, told the authorities that Perigorde was to leave that morning before daylight, for Chicago, in the interests of the bank.

Telegrams were then sent all along the line of the route to Chicago, authorizing the arrest of John Perigorde, the banker, for the murder of his wife.

That night he was arrested somewhere in the West, and the fact telegraphed back to New York.

John Perigorde was thunderstruck on hearing for what he had been arrested.

"It's a cruel hoax," he said, "for I kissed my wife good-by at three o'clock this morning, when she was alive and well."

"I hope you speak the truth," said the arresting officer, "for you don't look like one who would commit such a crime."

"It can't be possible that my wife has been murdered," said Perigorde. "I can't believe it."

"You'd better telegraph to some member of your family and inquire about it."

He did so, telegraphing to one of the bank directors, and received a reply to the effect that his wife was murdered.

The blow felled him to the floor in a deathlike swoon.

When he recovered, he asked the officer to take him at once to New York, without waiting for any legal formalities.

The officer did so, and on the second day after the murder, the accused was back in New York, a close prisoner.

His meeting with his little daughter May was heart-rending.

Her first cry was:

"Oh, papa, what did you kill mamma for?"

"Daughter—daughter!" groaned the grief-stricken father,

pressing the child to his bosom. "I did not do it. You never heard me speak a cross word to mamma in your life."

"No, papa, I never did," said May. "You never said anything to mamma then, but I heard mamma begging you not to kill her. Oh, my poor mamma!" and father and daughter wept together in their great sorrow.

The victim was buried in Greenwood cemetery. The accused husband and father attended in a carriage, accompanied by two armed officers of the law.

When the last words had been spoken by the man of God, John Perigorde sprang forward and knelt at the head of the coffin, and cried out in heartrending agony:

"Martha! Martha, my beloved! Thou knowest I am innocent of thy blood. I would have died for thee, my heart's love. What mystery surrounds thy fate and mine, God only knows. But I loved thee as I never loved any other being on earth. We were happy in each other's love! We parted with a kiss, and now, alas, thou art gone. Oh, cruel—cruel fate!"

He bowed his head and buried his face in his hands, shaken by convulsive sobs. There was not a dry eye in the immense throng that surrounded the vault.

After the funeral he was carried back to prison. Bail was refused, and the grand jury indicted him for the murder of his wife.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REVELRY AND THE SHADOW.

Charlie Pelton, the president of the Merry Ten, and Sam Jenkins repaired to a fashionable hotel bar on Broadway, and there ordered a bottle of champagne. Both were well-known young men about town, and, therefore, had many acquaintances among the young aristocracy of the upper tendon; hence they were joined by two others who were not members of the Merry Ten. In discussing the bottle of wine, the terrible tragedy of the Perigorde family was also discussed, during which Sam Jenkins maintained a dogged silence, but drinking deeply all the time. The second and third bottle was called for, and within an hour the entire party was hilariously drunk.

"I say, Sim," said one of the party, "that 'ere—hic—chap who—hic—killed that 'ere—hic—woman was a cow—hic—ardly cuss, eh?"

"Who's a coward, eh? Take that, and be d—d to you!" and with that Sam planted a blow between the young man's eyes that stretched him at full length on the floor.

"Why, Sam!" cried Pelton, almost instantly sobered by the sudden attack, "what do you mean? That is one of our friends!"

"Hands off, I say!" cried Jenkins, frantically striking right and left, springing backwards, so as to keep the others in front of him. "I didn't do it! I didn't do it!"

"Here, Sam, old boy," said Pelton, rushing in to take him away, "you know me, Charlie Pelton, of the Mer—"

"Off! Off, I say! Death to the man who touches me!" cried Sam, aiming a terrific blow at Charlie's head. Pelton dodged and kept out of the way.

"Let me get at him!" cried the young man who had been knocked down so unexpectedly. "The scoundrel hit me for nothing."

But a policeman fortunately made his appearance on the scene, and was told to take Sam to the stationhouse, as he was crazed with drink.

"Back! Back!" cried Sam, as the officer approached him. "I will not be taken alive! I didn't do it!"

"Got 'em bad!" said the officer, shaking his head.

"What jim-jams?" asked Pelton.

"Yes," and the officer made a dash to take him off his guard.

But Sam was too quick for him, and he gave him a stunning blow on the ear that sent him spinning away like a top. But the struggle could not last long. Others rushed in, and in a moment Jenkins was overpowered and handcuffed.

"Hold on!" said Pelton, slipping a banknote into the officer's hand, "don't take him to the stationhouse just for having the monkeys after him. Take him upstairs and leave him in my charge."

"You know him, then, do you?" the officer asked.

"Yes, he is my best friend."

The officer took him up to a room secured by Pelton, and left him there with his friend.

The moment he was overpowered Sam seemed cast down to the lowest depths of despair. He made no further resistance, but suffered them to lead him about like a child.

"Sam, old boy," said Pelton, as Jenkins lay prostrate on the bed; "that champagne was too much for you, eh?"

"Charlie! Charlie!" cried Sam, springing up and glaring wildly about the room, "you won't let 'em take me to prison!"

"Thunder, no!" exclaimed Pelton, laughing. "Why should they take you to prison? You did nothing but knock down Hal Bonner for insulting you."

Sam stopped and gazed fixedly at his friend.

"Is that all I did, Charlie?"

"Yes—and gave the policeman a taste of your fives when he tried to scoop you in."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all. We all thought you had the jim-jams!"

"I—I believe I did, Charlie," and Sam drew a long breath of relief.

"Well, you must draw it mild for a time, Sam, and not go in so deep. You can't stand as much as I can, you know."

"I guess I can't. Confound it! I am vexed with myself for acting so foolishly."

"Oh, you are not responsible for that, old fellow. You can make it all right with Hal when you meet him again. You won't be able to be with us at the club to-night?"

"I guess not. I think I had better not drink any more for a week or so," said Sam, shaking his head reflectively.

"Well, I'll tell the Merry Ten that you are indisposed, and we'll drink your health. I'll go home with you, and see that you are duly put to bed and—"

"Put to thunder," interrupted Sam. "You only want to see Nell—that's all. The sly minx gave me a lecture this morning about the late hours I keep."

"Well, you deserved it, I should think," said Pelton, laughing.

Some time after, when the crowd below in the hotel had dispersed, Charlie and Sam passed down the stairs and out into the street. They wended their way to the home of the Jenkinses, where Pelton was always a welcome visitor. He was Nellie Jenkins' accepted lover.

Sam passed on up to his room and left Charlie to the tender mercies of Nell, to which fate Pelton seemed perfectly resigned.

It was not until after the lapse of a week that Sam Jenkins met the Merry Ten in their clubhouse on Sixth avenue. He then seemed five years older than when they saw him last. But there was a recklessness about him that pleased them more than anything else could have done. He was generous to a fault, and spent money liberally with his friends.

"Ah, Mr. Jenkins," said Cerberus, as Sam appeared at the door of the clubhouse on Saturday night, "we have missed you very much. Glad to see you back again."

"Thanks, Cerb, old fellow. You've all had a good time, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. Case of jim-jams night before last."

"Who was it?"

"Mr. Layton—took on like mad, pretending somebody's ghost was after him."

"The devil!"

"Yes, sir, and I took him upstairs, where he raved and screamed for an hour or more."

Sam turned as white as a sheet.

What if a ghost should come to him in his cups? He half resolved to drink no wine that night.

But he did; forgetting everything but the pleasure of the hour.

The song and toast went round.

All the Merry Ten were there in their places.

An elegant supper was served up, of which they all ate heartily.

Then the champagne was brought forward again.

"The Merry Ten, boys!" said Pelton, holding a brimming glass over his head. "May the fat of the land be theirs, and may their capacity to hold wine increase with years."

"Good! Good for you, Charlie!" roared Sam, drinking a bumper to the toast.

"Give us a song, Jenkins."

"Yes—a song, a song!" chorused the party.

Sam cleared his throat and sang in a full, clear baritone:

"Thine eyes, like the stars that are beaming,
Have entered the depth of my soul,
And my heart hath grown wild with its dreaming,
And the feelings I cannot control;
In vain do I strive to dissemble,
And vow that I love thee no more,
Yet a touch of thy hand makes me tremble,
And recalls all my sorrows of yore.

"Oh, why once again have I met thee?

And why is this sorrow now mine?

In vain do I strive to forget thee,

But my soul is enslaved unto thine.

Still—still do I love thee and fear thee,

Would keep thee, yet beg thee to go,

'Tis death to be parted, but near thee

'Tis woe—irretrievable woe."

"Good! Good, Sam!" cried the Merry Ten. "You never sang so well before. Give us another!"

"Oh, it's dry work singing," laughed Sam, refilling his glass. "Let some one else sing while I moisten my melody works."

"Trot out your tuneful lyre, Simcoe!" cried Arthur DeForest to his vis-a-vis across the table, "and give us something soul-stirring."

The laugh went around, and several glasses followed in quick succession. The entire party began to show signs of intoxication.

But the mad revelry went on.

Bottle after bottle was opened, and the song and jest went around. Sam Jenkins was the wildest and most reckless of them all. Springing upon a chair, he waved his glass above his head and sang:

"So say we all of us,
So say we all of us,
So say we all of us,
So say we all,"

in which he was joined by the Merry Ten with tremendous power, making the welkin ring with their voices in the familiar chorus.

Suddenly, with a wild yell, Jenkins sprang upon the table among the dishes and bottles.

The next moment he half-crouched and gazed toward a half-opened door as though his very soul was in his eyes. A deathly pallor overspread his features.

"There—there!" he cried, pointing toward the door, "that white shadowy form with the crimson stains on her dress! Ha, ha, ha!" and the wild maniacal laugh that burst from his pallid lips caused every one to start from the table with terror plainly depicted on their faces. "Back! Back, I say!" he screamed, suddenly retreating to the other end of the table, knocking off bottles and dishes. "Point not at me! I am not guilty. Ha, ha, ha! There she goes—look—look there, the shadowy form of that woman! Back! Back, woman, I know you not! Ha, ha, ha! Yes, point at me if you like, but don't touch me—ha, ha, ha! Yes, I did it—I did it! Ha, ha, ha!" and with a scream he sank down among the dishes on the table, while a white, misty, shadowy form was seen gliding past him and vanishing through the half-opened door.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUICIDE.

The reader will doubtless remember the remarks of Cerberus, the bullet-headed janitor of the clubhouse about Simcoe Layton, one of the Merry Ten, having had an attack of the "jim-jams" the night before, and that he raved about a ghost haunting him. The reader, no doubt, sees a history in that little incident in the life of the fashionable young man, and he is not mistaken.

There is a history connected with Simcoe Layton's career—a sad heart history, which ended in blotting out the life of a fair young girl.

About a year before the opening of our story, Simcoe Layton, himself belonging to one of the old, wealthy families of New York, won the affections of Adele Heron, a young lady whose family, wealth and connections equaled his own in every respect. They became engaged, and the match was looked upon with great favor by both families. He was ardent in his professions of love, and attentive in his devotion. Few men were ever loved as Adele Heron loved him. He was her idol—her god—and she worshiped him with a pure and holy love.

But one day there came a panic in Wall Street, and many great private fortunes were swept out of existence in an hour. Among that number was the fortune of the Herons. The Laytons suffered considerably, but were able to retain their possessions. The Herons, however, were sold out, and were compelled to go into apartments more in keeping with their altered circumstances. But even in the loss of fortune and position in society which she had adorned, Adele Heron was happy and contented, for in the love of Simcoe Layton she was rich beyond the power of money to buy. Alas! how terrible was the blow she was destined to receive! How cruel and heartless the conduct of her lover, whom she had deemed perfect in all the excellencies of true manhood! Instead of going to her side and comforting her in her affliction, he stayed away, day after day, till her proud father, his heart broken by the reverses that had befallen him, told her to forget one so unworthy of her love.

"No, no, I cannot!" moaned the poor girl. "I love him better than life, and it is Simcoe Layton or death!"

"My God, Adele!" groaned the aged father. "What will you do? The man is false to you—he will not come to you."

"Though all the angels of Heaven should tell me he were

false, I would not believe it!" exclaimed the girl, whose love would not doubt its idol.

"Love is, indeed, blind," murmured the father. "God help you to bear it when your eyes are really opened, my child."

Another day passed, and still the once devoted lover did not appear. Adele Heron sat down and wrote:

"My own darling:—They tell me you are false to me, but not until you tell me so yourself will I believe it. I will not doubt you, Simcoe, though all the world should say: 'He has forgotten you—he loves you no longer.' But why do you not come to me, darling? I love you—love you more than life. Come to your Adele."

This note she sent to his residence by mail, and patiently awaited his coming in the evening.

But he came not.

The next day there came a little box with her name on it. She opened it, and staggered back like one stricken by a violent blow.

It contained all her letters and little love missives which she had written to him during the halcyon days of their courtship.

But she did not faint.

But with a face as white and rigid as marble, she took up the note that accompanied the box, and read:

"Dear Adele:—The best proof of my unselfish love for you is that I am willing to give you up rather than hold you to your engagement, for I fear that my fortune is also swallowed up in the crash. Having no business experience, I could not support a wife, and I would not be the cause of subjecting you to a life less pleasant and comfortable than that which you have always lived. Let us forget that we ever knew each other. You may keep the ring I gave you. With best wishes for your future happiness, I am ever your friend,

"Simcoe Layton."

"False—false!" muttered Adele, in a hollow tone of voice. "My idol is cast down and broken at my feet. My heart is dead—why, then, should I live?"

She quietly folded up the note and replaced it in the envelope and put it back in the box with her returned letters. She seemed calm and deliberate in everything she did. All that day she spent in her room, arranging her effects and writing letters.

The next morning she was found dead in her room, clasping a letter in her right hand, which was addressed to—

"Mr. Simcoe Layton."

In the other hand was clasped a small phial with a few drops of morphine still remaining in it, thus showing by what means she died.

The letter to Layton read:

"With your love, which you have so often declared to me, I could have lived. Without it, I must die. I loved you solely for yourself—your conduct shows but too plainly that you loved me for my money. When my fortune was lost your love went with it. This revelation of your cold, heartless character pains me more than the news of your sudden death would have done. You will never again know what happiness is, for as long as reason remains with you the memory of your treatment of Adele Heron will haunt you like a spectre from the grave."

Adele Heron."

This letter, together with the news of Adele's death, filled Simcoe Layton with remorse and horror. In his selfish nature he had sought the love of the young maiden because she was an heiress; in his selfishness he deserted her because she was

no longer able to bring to him a fortune as a wedding portion; and in his selfish pride he felt wounded by the revelation of his true character which the letter of his victim gave to the world. How well she told the truth may be inferred from the fact that, though he kept up his membership with the Merry Ten, none of them really respected him.

He took to drinking deeply, and at times roared like a madman in his cups, complaining of being pursued by a white, shadowy form, which haunted him like a ghost. They all knew what the trouble was, and never alluded to it in his presence. They rather sympathized with him, and shook their heads ominously, saying:

"He will blow out his brains some day, and that will be the end of it."

The reader can now understand why, in his cups, Simcoe Layton raved about a ghost haunting him.

But the prediction of poor Adele that he would never know a happy hour again had proven literally true, and now, after a year had passed away, all his show of merriment was the effect of sheer desperation. He became perfectly reckless in drinking, and spent money with a lavish hand.

But the time came when the bank where his money was on deposit refused to honor his check.

His fortune, which had been left to him by a relative, was gone. He had now only his father to fall back upon. The elder Layton was very wealthy, and at the same time very prudent. He was astounded at hearing that Simcoe had spent the thousands which had been placed to his credit in the bank.

"Such reckless extravagance would break a Vanderbilt!" he said to his son. "I will give you an allowance of three thousand a year, payable quarterly, but beyond that, not another cent!"

Simcoe was thus cut off with a sum scarcely equal to his club expenses. This did not add to his quiet repose by any means. He must have his pleasures—his champagne suppers at all hazards—and vainly sought to increase his allowance by winnings from the gaming tables. But he lost instead, and he was forced to borrow from those of his friends who doubted not his ability to repay on demand.

But matters went on from bad to worse with him, until, in his desperation, he attempted and succeeded in picking the pocket of Sam Jenkins of one thousand dollars. It was done neatly and quickly, but the lynx-eyed Cerberus saw it all. He grimly smiled and tracked him to a private room upstairs.

As he entered the room Cerberus saw Layton make a quick motion, as though trying to conceal something.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "That was quickly and neatly done, Master Simcoe."

"Eh! What did you say?" exclaimed Layton, in confusion. "I don't understand you!"

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well, give me just half of what you find in that pocketbook, and I'll tell you," said Cerberus, with a grim smile, extending a hand towards Layton.

Layton turned ashen pale, and glared at the wily janitor in dismay.

"The secret is safe with me, Master Simcoe, but it will cost you just half the pile," and Cerberus chuckled over his power.

"I am in your power, Cerberus," said Layton, in a whisper, "but I am not so guilty as it appears. Jenkins has owed me a thousand dollars, borrowed money, for several months. I knew he had about that much money with him to-night, and fearing he would get drunk and spend it all, I did what you saw me do. I believe I was right, under the circumstances."

"No doubt of that, Master Simcoe," said Cerberus grimly. "So there's a thousand in it, eh? Well, I'll take just five hundred of that."

"But—but—you understand that it's my money?"

"Only half—only half, Master Simcoe," said the janitor, ex-

tending his hand, and taking the wallet out of Layton's hand. He then opened it and counted the sum of a thousand dollars, one-half of which he took, and then returned the wallet to Layton.

"Now, look here, Master Layton," he said, "how do you think Jenkins came by all this money?"

"Oh, his father is rich," said Layton.

"So he is; but I happen to know that his father doesn't give him a cent until he agrees to go into business with Grimes, down near the South Ferry, and yet I saw him with a big roll of bills the other night. There's something wrong in that quarter, and I want to find it out. He has made a big haul in some mysterious manner. You know, he saw a white, shadowy form with bloodstains on it the other night, and fainted at the sight of it, just as you do sometimes."

"For God's sake; hush!" gasped Layton, turning as white as a sheet.

"Yes, I will, in a moment," said the janitor, "when I am through. You see, I think he has committed a murder, and got a pile of money, and—"

"Great heavens!" gasped Simcoe.

"I want you to freeze to me, and watch, listen and find out all you can from him. Get him drunk, and make him believe, in confidence, that you know all about his game, and tell him of some big haul you made once. If we can get him in our power, we can bleed him for a cool ten thousand each."

"By heavens, Cerberus, I will not do such a thing!" exclaimed Layton, impulsively springing to his feet.

"By heavens, you will!" hissed Cerberus, glaring at him fiercely. "You will do my bidding or be denounced as a pickpocket!"

"My God!" groaned Simcoe, sinking back into a chair. "I am in your power—I will do it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOVERS.

The night he raved so wildly at what he said was a white, shadowy form with bloodstains on its garments, Sam Jenkins spent in one of the bedrooms on the top floor of the clubhouse. His friend, Charlie Pelton, the president of the club, remained with him. He slept but little during the night, and the next morning he looked extremely haggard and pallid.

"I say, Sam, old fellow," said Pelton to him the next morning, "you look as though you had been run through a threshing machine."

"I feel just that way, Charlie," Sam replied. "I've got a head on me this morning as big as a bowl."

"I guess so. The fact is, you've been going in over your depth lately. I think you'd better check up and not go so fast, don't you?"

"Hanged if I don't think I'd better swear off altogether."

"Oh, that would never do, old fellow!" laughed Charlie. "How would a teetotaler look as a member of the Merry Ten, eh?"

"He might look and feel out of place," said Sam; "but he'd look and feel better than I do this morning, I guess."

"Oh, you are on the stool of repentance this morning," said Charlie, laughing. "You are a fit subject for a temperance lecturer. Just take a whisky cocktail, a brisk walk, and a good breakfast, and you'll be altogether another man."

After taking a bath, a whisky cocktail, and something to eat. Sam did feel like another man. But he could not blot out of his memory the terrible scene of the night before, when, as his brain was on fire with the wine he had drank, the

white, shadowy form of Martha Perigorde arose up before him and pointed an accusing finger at him.

He went out to Central Park with Pelton, and together they drank several glasses of wine during the day, though neither of them showed any effects of the liquor. In the afternoon they parted, Charlie going downtown, and Sam to his home to sleep and rest.

As has already been hinted, Charlie Pelton was engaged to Nellie Jenkins, Sam's only sister. She was a lovely girl, who loved her brother as few brothers are ever loved, or ever deserve to be.

The recent heavy drinking of Sam's alarmed her, and she began a series of lectures to him, at which he laughed good-naturedly, and promised to reform. But Nellie grew more persistent in her entreaties, begging him to leave the club at once if he would save himself from becoming a common drunkard.

"Why, Nell, old girl," he said, that afternoon when she again begged him to leave the Merry Ten Club, "do you think I have no more self-respect than to become a common drunkard? Come—come, Sis, you give yourself unnecessary fears and trouble on my account. I am in no danger whatever."

"Brother," said Nellie tearfully, "your very danger lies in your overweening confidence in yourself. Why, Alexander the Great died a drunkard, as have thousands of the greatest men of the earth. Why, then, should you not be as liable to become one as they? Come away from it, Sam, my dear, noble brother, and—"

"See here, Sis," said Sam, in a good-humored way, "you are engaged to Charlie, and we take drink for drink. He is president of our club, and drinks as much as any of us. If your arguments hold good in his case as well as mine, then I will say you are in as much danger of becoming a drunkard's wife as I am of becoming a drunkard."

At his words she turned ashen pale. In her anxiety for her only brother she had not thought of the danger that threatened her lover. She loved Charlie Pelton with all her heart, and had promised to be his wife in another year. She had a tender heart, and a strong head. She was quick to reply:

"Then if Charlie doesn't leave the club and stop drinking, I'll never be his wife."

"Why, Nell!" cried Sam, surprised at both her language and earnest manner, "you don't mean that, do you?"

"Indeed, I do," she said. "I have no notion of becoming a drunkard's wife."

"But Charlie wouldn't leave the club just because you wanted him to."

"Then we will see which he loves the most, the club and his wine or Nellie Jenkins," quietly replied Nellie, her eyes flashing a determined spirit. "I am jealous of the wine cup, brother, and if he loves the cup more than he does me, I will never be his wife."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I don't believe you've lost some of your senses, Nell."

"If I have, I am glad of it."

"Well, if you succeed in getting Charles to swear off and leave the club, I will do so, too."

"I don't know that I can do that, brother. I have no right to demand that he shall quit the club, but will tell him that he must sign the pledge and keep it one year before I will become his wife."

"That would anger him, and he would break the engagement," said Sam seriously.

"Better, a thousand times better do that than for me to wed him and then repent the step. No, Sam, I am determined—my mind is fully made up that I will not marry a man who drinks. If Charlie loves his glass of wine now better than he does me—and had rather give me up than his wine, then all

my womanly instincts would revolt at the idea of marrying him."

Sam Jenkins was astonished.

He loved his pretty sister, and was proud of her beauty, her sound, hard, practical sense and splendid accomplishments. But he knew the independent spirit of Charlie Pelton, and dreaded the result of Nellie's determination. He had been particularly anxious to bring about the marriage, as it was one in every way desirable.

That evening Charlie called on Nellie, and was welcomed as a lover usually is by the girl he loves.

"Where is Sam?" Charlie asked, when he was seated on the sofa at Nellie's side.

"He has gone out," said Nellie. "We had quite a quarrel to-day, and he is not in a good humor, I'm afraid."

"What—mad with you?" said Charlie gallantly. "How any one could be angry with you I cannot conceive, dear Nellie."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Charlie, for I have the same quarrel to pick with you."

"With me? That can't be, darling, for I won't quarrel with you—so there, now!"

"It takes two to quarrel always, don't it?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then if you'll keep your promise not to quarrel with me we'll have no quarrel."

"That's so, darling," and Charlie imprinted a kiss on her hand. "We'll never quarrel unless you say you love me more than I do you, for I will never admit that."

"Do you really love me more than anything else on earth, Charlie?"

"Nellie, darling, do you doubt my love for you? I love you better than my own life. I could die for you, love, and think myself happy in so doing, if your happiness demanded it. What can I do to prove to you my heart's love?"

"Never drink another glass of wine, Charlie," she said, "and I will never doubt you, or ask you any other proof of your love for me," and as she spoke she laid a hand on his arm, and looked pleadingly up into his face.

CHAPTER IX.

WINE OR WOMAN—WHICH—THE ATTACK.

A look of blank surprise came over Charlie Pelton when Nellie uttered those words. He never dreamed that she would apply such a test as that to his love for her. He expected her to mention something that he would take a special delight in doing.

A silence fell upon them, during which Nellie could hear her own heart wildly throbbing. Her whole life's happiness depended upon the words he should speak. Her very soul was centered in her gaze up into his face as she breathlessly awaited his reply.

"Nellie," he asked, after a long pause, "do you really mean it?"

"Yes, Charles, I do."

"What has put such a thing into your head?"

"My brother has been drinking terribly for several months, and I know that unless he stops short he'll soon be a common drunkard. I talked seriously with him about it to-day, and when he said that you drank as much as he did, and that I was as much in danger of becoming a drunkard's wife as he was in ever turning out a drunkard. I said that if you loved your wine more than you did me, I would not marry you."

Charlie paled at her words.

"But you have said," she continued, "that you loved me bet-

ter than anything else on earth. I will no longer doubt you. I am happy in your love, Charlie."

"But—but you really don't mean that, Nellie?"

"Yes, I do, Charlie. I am really in earnest. Why do you ask that? Are you really so fond of a glass of wine that you hesitate between giving it or me up?"

"Nellie, I really cannot believe that you know what you are doing."

"I think I do, Charlie. I know too well that if you continue to drink, you are in danger of becoming a slave to the thirst and habit, for that is the way drunkards are made. On the other hand, I know that if you never drink you are in no danger whatever from that source."

Such arguments could not be refuted.

Charlie did not attempt to do so.

Their truth was too apparent.

"But, Nellie," he said, "your father has been drinking his wine every day for nearly forty years, and he is not a drunkard yet. Why, then, impose such a thing as total abstinence on me? Thousands drink all their lives without ever becoming drunkards."

"Yes; and thousands die miserable drunkards. You and Sam have been drunk many times together, Charlie. You are in a fair way to—"

"But just look at the awkward position you would place me in, Nellie," he said, interrupting her. "I am president of the most high-toned and fashionable young men's social club in New York City. Were I to swear off drinking, as you ask me to do, I would not only lose my position there, but would be frozen out of the club altogether, and be snubbed everywhere in polite society as a young man with very Quixotic notions in his head."

"All of which you would surely be willing to endure for my sake, would you not?" she said, smiling.

"But why require it of me? Why subject me to such an unnecessary annoyance? Why require me to retire from polite society?"

"Charlie, society has shunned many a man for drinking too much wine, but never for drinking too little of it, so rest easy on that score."

"You are mistaken there, Nellie. Your brother himself would not like me for a companion if I were to become a teetotaler."

"On the contrary, he said he would swear off if you would. Now, Charlie, my mind is made up. I will not stand here and throw myself at you—begging you to have me for your wife. You have your choice of the two—Nellie Jenkins, or your wine. You cannot have both—which will you choose?" And as she spoke, Nellie stood before him in all her loveliness. Her very paleness added to her beauty. Charlie looked up at the beautiful, determined girl, and yielded. Love for her was the stronger at the moment, and he said:

"I will choose Nellie Jenkins, first, last and always."

"Oh, I knew you would, Charlie!" she cried, springing into his arms and resting her head lovingly on his shoulder.

"How could I do otherwise, Nell?" he asked.

"I didn't think you would give me up for a glass of wine," said she, "and now I know that brother Sam will promise never to drink any more. Oh, Charlie, you don't know how happy you have made me to-night. I love you now more than ever."

"You will give us one week in which to sign the pledge, will you not?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes—but why do you—"

"Never mind about that now, Nell," he said, interrupting her. "You will be satisfied in the end, so leave Sam and I alone for that time."

Nellie was only too happy in the victory she had gained to press her point any further. So she dropped the subject

and turned to the piano, where she played and sang several of his favorite songs for him.

He left the house at his usual hour, with her kiss fresh on his lips, and wended his way toward the clubrooms of the Merry Ten.

"By all the saints!" he muttered to himself, as he walked briskly along the street, "but this is a pretty kettle of fish! Think of me leaving the Merry Ten and turning a cold water temperance man! Bah! The very thought of such a thing sickens me! I wonder what has come over Nell all of a sudden? Sam has been going it rather steep during the last two months, and that's what's frightened her. I must see Sam and arrange some plan by which we can make her believe we are all right. By George, but she got me in a close corner that time, for she knew I wouldn't give her up for all the world! I wonder if she would have done as poor Adele Heron did when Simcoe Layton went back on her?" And the vanity of the young man about town enabled him to think that she would have died for love of him.

As he passed a dark portion of the street, when just opposite a dark doorway, a man in a mask sprang out in front of him, hissing:

"Your time has come, villain! You shall die by my hand while—"

"Hold!" exclaimed Charlie, springing aside as the stranger raised a bright, long, keen-edged blade to plunge to the hilt in his bosom. "I am not your man—back—back, I say!"

Charlie Pelton was by no means a coward, nor was he deficient in physical strength. He carried a pistol, but so closely did the man press him that he could only use his cane. It was fortunate for him that the cane he carried was a stout, solid limb, or he would have fallen a victim to the unknown assassin's fury.

He dealt the man a blow on the arm that sent the knife flying into the middle of the street. The madman stood disarmed before him, with an arm almost paralyzed by the blow from the cane.

With a scream of baffled rage, the man sprang at him again, and clutched him by the throat.

"Back—back, I say, or I'll brain you!" cried Charlie, stepping backwards so as to keep him far enough from him to strike effectively with the cane.

"It is death for one of us, Simcoe Layton!" hissing replied the man, making another savage spring at him.

"I—am—not—Layton!" cried Charlie, dealing two or three powerful blows with the cane on the unprotected head of the masked man, which brought him to his knees. But he sprang up again, and renewed the attack, when Charlie discarded his cane and drew his pistol, which he cocked, and presented at the man's breast, with:

"Another step, and you are a dead man!"

The man recoiled from the muzzle of the pistol.

He glanced at Pelton a moment in evident astonishment.

"Perdition!" he exclaimed. "I've made a mistake—you are not the man!" and with that he turned and darted away through the crowd, which had quickly gathered when the first blow was struck.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISTAKE OF THE MASK.

The masked man's escape was as sudden as was his attack, and ere Charlie could recover presence of mind to pursue, the assailant was gone. Several of the crowd, however, started off around the corner, which, it was understood, was the route he took.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked a man, stepping up alongside of Charlie.

"No, sir. Not in the least," was the reply.

"How did it happen?"

"I was walking along here when the man sprang out of that doorway and attacked me. He mistook me for another man, a friend of mine, for he called me by his name, and tried to stab me."

"Do you know the man?"

"No—he wore a mask."

In their eagerness to hear his story, the crowd pressed close upon him. He felt some one pulling at his watch chain. He grasped the hand and wheeled like a flash to strike the pickpocket to the earth with his cane. The nimble-fingered chap escaped the blow by dodging, and the cane came down on a new plug hat on the head of a quiet, inoffensive young man who was looking on and listening to the story that Pelton was telling. The hat was utterly demolished, but it saved the young man's head from being cracked, as it turned the blow, which finally landed on the head of an urchin near by. The boy dropped like a brick.

The crowd scattered a little at this vigorous demonstration on the part of Pelton.

The pickpocket broke the watch chain, but did not succeed in getting either that or the watch.

"What's the row here?" gruffly demanded a policeman, coming up at that moment.

"I was attacked by a masked man awhile ago," said Charlie, "who tried to stab me. I knocked the knife out of his hand, and then knocked him down. He then got away."

"Which way did he go?" the officer asked.

"Round the corner there."

"Do you recollect anything about him that you could describe?"

"Only that he was a stoutly built man, and—"

"Here's the knife, sir," said a boy, handing the officer a formidable looking dirk-knife, which he had picked up near the street car track.

"You must come with me to the station and give a description of the man, as near as you can," said the officer to Charlie, taking the knife from the boy.

"I am willing to do that, of course," said Charlie, turning to accompany the knight of the locust.

"See here, mister!" called the young man with the demolished tile, holding the hat up to view with the crown cut off, and the balance looking as though a thunderbolt had struck it, "what'll you give me for that there new hat, eh?"

"Do you call that there a new hat?" cried a boy in the crowd. "Shoot it!"

"It was new last Saturday," said the young man, running his arm at full length through it, "but it ain't new no more. I want another one, mister. I cannot afford to buy hats for you to practice on, you know. I ain't that kind of a hatrack."

"What's the hat worth?" Charlie asked, with a smile.

"It cost me five dollars Satur—"

"Well, get another one, and keep your head out of the way next time," said Charlie, handing the young man a five dollar bill.

The officer accompanied him to the stationhouse, where he related the story of the attack on him by the unknown party, giving as good a description of him as possible under the circumstances.

"Where can Simcoe Layton be found?" the captain asked.

"At the Merry Ten clubhouse on Sixth avenue."

A detective was sent with Charlie around to the clubrooms, where they found all the members of the club engaged in killing time in games of various kinds.

"Simcoe," said Charlie, as he entered the room where the latter was engaged in a game of whist, "a man tried to stab me

for you on the street, and had he not discovered that I was not you he would have soon made worm's meat of me. Come in another room with me, and see if you can throw any light on the subject."

Simcoe Layton turned ashen pale at these words, and almost gasped for breath. He was unable to rise for nearly ten minutes, and seeing that every eye was centered upon him, he made a desperate effort, and sprang to his feet.

"Yes," he whispered, huskily. "Come on! Come on!" And leading the way into another room, followed by Pelton and the detective, he sank down in a chair next to the table and buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Why, Layton, my friend," exclaimed Pelton, in the greatest astonishment, "what in the world is the meaning of this?"

But Layton did not seem to hear him, so great was his emotion at the moment.

"Wait!" whispered the detective. "Give him time. There is something back of this which we must know about."

And so it proved.

In a few minutes Layton lifted his head and gazed up at his friend and the detective. But such a look! He seemed to have grown ten years older during the last ten minutes.

"Tell me all about it, Charlie?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

Charlie then told of the attack made upon him by the masked man, and the language he used.

"He thought I was you, Sim," he said, "and called me by your name, cursing me, and saying that my hour had come. I knocked the dirk out of his hand, when he discovered his mistake and fled."

Charlie noticed Simcoe shiver as though convulsed by ague, while he was talking, and heard him mutter to himself:

"Yes, it's he—it's he."

"Now, can you give us any clue by which we can lay our hands on this mysterious, would-be assassin, Mr. Layton?" asked the officer, taking a seat alongside of him.

"I am afraid I cannot," said Layton, shaking his head.

"Why, don't you know the man?"

"Yes, perfectly well, but to tell his name would not benefit me any."

"What—this masked assassin who is trying to slay you in the dark! It would insure your safety to have him within the four walls of a prison!"

"I would rather take my chances of escaping him than to give him away, for reasons best known to myself."

The detective and Charlie Pelton stared at each other in dumfounded amazement.

"Do you mean to say, Layton," Charlie asked, after a pause, "that you know who this man is, and yet you refuse to give his name to the police?"

"That's it, Charlie," replied Simcoe, calmly.

"Are you in your senses?"

"I hope I am."

"Can you give any explanation for such extraordinary conduct?" the officer asked.

"Yes," Layton replied, "but not for public," and then arising, he tripped cautiously toward the door, opened it, and looked out. Then, closing and locking it, he returned and seated himself by the table again, preparatory to explaining his singular conduct.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS VENDETTA.

Pelton drew his chair alongside that of his friend.

"In the beginning I will say that I will give no name,

preferring to run the risk of being killed, or of killing him, than to have him arrested and the public made acquainted with the cause of the trouble between us," said Layton, looking the detective straight in the eyes as he spoke.

"Has he sworn to take your life?" the officer asked.

"Yes; and he has attempted it several times before to-night. But I was always ready for him each time. Once I wounded him badly, and was hurt myself, but we each kept the fact a secret."

"By heavens, it is the strangest thing I ever heard of!" exclaimed Pelton, excitedly.

"He has sworn to have my life at all hazards, and I have been on my guard, only to prevent him from making his threat good. I have never fought him except in self-defense, and I never will."

"Why does he pursue you thus persistently?" the officer asked.

"Ah! That is our secret. Some morning one or the other of us will be found dead on the street, and that will be the end of it."

"Simcoe," said Charlie, "I know you will pardon me if I ask you whether or not it has any connection with the Heron affair, and—"

"I can answer no questions," interrupted Layton, quickly, with a look of pain on his face.

"Then I will ask none," said Pelton, looking at the officer.

"Is it to avoid publicity that you keep silent about this thing, Mr. Layton?" asked the officer.

"Yes."

"Then the publication of these strange things will give you a thousand times more publicity than would the arrest and conviction of the man."

"Why need there, by any means, be any publicity given the matter? Why not let it drop where it is?"

"That cannot be done."

"Why not?"

"Because such news as this is always given to the press."

"But you can tell them that I simply refused to make any statement, without using my name, can you not? I will see you again about it in a day or two, if you call on me. Keep the matter out of the public prints, and then let me see you again. There is my card—call in two days and I will tell you something more about it."

The detective took the card and bowed himself out of the clubhouse, leaving Pelton and Layton alone together.

He knew that there was good pay somewhere in the case, and was resolved to have some of it.

"Sim, old fellow," said Pelton, as soon as they were alone, "this is a strange piece of business. Can't you tell me the secret and trust me to stand by you in the racket?"

"It will be much better for you not to get mixed up in it, Charlie," said Layton, shaking his head. "I may tell you all some day, but not now."

"Well, tell me one thing—do you need any help—a friend in the matter?"

"Thanks—no. I can attend to the matter myself. He never attacks except when I am alone. Then I am always on the lookout for him, and ready to meet him."

Charlie and Sim then returned to the clubroom, where a dozen or more were waiting, eager to learn the news. Of course, they turned them off with a version of the affair that was anything but a correct one.

Charlie lost no time in seeking out Sam Jenkins, his prospective brother-in-law.

"Sam," he said. "Have you heard the latest news?"

"No—what is it?"

"I have attended a temperance lecture and have agreed to sign the pledge on condition that you will do the same thing."

"Then I can truly say that you will never sign the pledge," said Sam, "for I'll be everlasting hornswaggled if I sign anything of the kind."

"Why, you were in a very serious notion of doing so this morning," said Charlie, with a laugh. "How is it now—what change has come over the spirit of your dreams?"

"That was this morning," replied Sam, dealing the cards in a game of euchre he was playing. "I am in a different frame of mind this evening, I assure you."

"But he'll be ready to sign in the morning," said one of the party, "if he takes any more glasses of wine to-night."

"Who did you hear lecture, Charlie?" Sam asked, looking up—"Gough?"

"No; a better one than he," replied Charlie, and then, leaning forward, he whispered "Nellie" in his ear, at which Sam leaned back in his chair and laughed long, hard and hearty.

"I have heard that lecture often, old fellow," he said, "and I haven't signed yet, nor do I intend to."

"I say, Sam, end that game and come over in this corner here with me. Business."

"All right. Here, take my hand, DeForrest, and I'll go now," and then giving his seat to DeForrest, he followed his friend over to an unoccupied corner of the room.

"Look here, Sam," said Charlie, as soon as they were seated, "Nellie has got me in a tight place. She thinks you are in danger of becoming a common drunkard."

"Yes; she told me that to-day," added Sam.

"She told me to-night that you said that I drank as much as you did, and that if she could induce me to sign the pledge you would do the same thing."

"Yes, and that very remark did the work for us," said Charlie, "for she gave me the choice of giving either her or the glass up—one or the other."

"The devil she did!"

"Yes; and, of course, I told her I would give up the glass in the future."

"And drink out of a jug or bottle henceforth and forever," laughed Sam.

"No; I believe I said wine—not glass."

"Well, take whisky then."

"But she will soon drop to the dodge. I asked for one week to make up my mind as to the course I would pursue in reference to the club."

"You don't mean to give up your club and the wine, too, do you, Charlie?" Sam asked, in no little surprise.

"I don't see what else there remains for me to do. If I remain in the club and not drink they will freeze me out, for the Merry Ten is by no means a temperance club, and I would lose Nellie besides."

"Ah, pshaw, Charlie—you don't mean to quit, do you?"

"Well, tell me what I am to do, then."

"Why, do like a good many other temperance men do—take it behind the door—on the sly."

"But I don't like to play such a game with Nellie, Sam. She is too serious to be trifled with, I can tell you," said Charlie, shaking his head. "She wouldn't put up with any double dealing."

"The woman never lived that couldn't be deceived by man—they expect it—old fellow—in fact, they like it. They like a man all the better for the little devilry that is in him."

Charlie laughed, and said:

"Well, we must fix upon some plan of action, for Nellie is in earnest and means business."

"Ah, we'll fix that up—never fear—let's have a bottle of wine now."

The two young men adjourned to another room, where they drank a bottle of wine between them, during which time they suggested many plans by which they could deceive fair Nellie, and continue as members of the Merry Ten.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASKED AND MUFLLED MAN IN THE DARK.

"Now, tell us all about it, Charlie," said Arthur DeForrest, as soon as the door closed on the detective.

"Tell you about what?" Charlie asked.

"The fight. You said you were attacked on the street by some one who took you for Simcoe."

"Oh, yes. Well, I knocked the knife out of his hand with my cane, and he took to his heels when he saw that I was not his man."

"But did he call Simcoe's name?" asked another member, as they all ceased playing their games to listen to the story.

"Yes, but my voice, I think, told him of his mistake."

"What did he say?"

"I don't remember his exact words, but it was to the effect that he had me now."

"Did he actually try to stab you?" another asked.

"Yes."

"Would you know the man again?"

"No; he wore a mask."

"A mask!" exclaimed several at once.

"Yes—a mask."

"See here, Layton, how about this? Have you any idea who the rascal is?"

"No," replied Layton, bluntly.

"The devil you haven't!"

Layton only shook his head.

"Haven't you a quarrel with somebody?"

"Not with any one who would try to assassinate me in the dark."

"This is strange—confoundedly strange," said Sam Jenkins, to his companions.

"Yes—a mystery. What did the detective say about it, Charlie?"

"He has a theory," said Pelton, "of which we can say nothing until he has obtained a better clew."

"Ah, ah, yes! The best police the world ever saw will look wise, and, mayhap, stumble on something some day," said Sam Jenkins. "My advice to you, Layton, is to go armed, and plug the villain the next time he shows himself."

"Just leave that for me," said Simcoe.

"Don't let him get in the first blow, Sim," said Arthur DeForrest.

"Of course not," said Layton. "I am on the lookout for that."

"You are, eh?", said Sam Jenkins. "If you don't know the party, how is it that you are armed to the teeth, and on the lookout for him?"

The question startled every one present.

But Layton preserved an unruffled front.

"I said I didn't know who he was, but I have met him twice before, as Pelton did to-night, and got the best of it. He has pursued me for months."

"By the Eternal!" exclaimed Sam Jenkins. "This is getting interesting."

"Yes, indeed."

"Why don't you put detectives on his track?"

"I have."

"And they can't catch him?"

"They haven't so far."

A silence ensued of several minutes duration, during which Pelton, Layton, and a few others engaged in a game of euchre. The others followed their example, and soon the usual noisy chatting filled the room. At a very late hour the members of the Merry Ten departed for their several homes. Charlie Pelton and Sam Jenkins accompanied Simcoe Layton to his residence, which was only a few blocks distant from their

own. On the way they discussed the attempted assassination, and the two friends volunteered their aid in case he needed it.

"I don't think he will attempt it again soon," said Layton, "as he may think that his mistake to-night may lead to his identification and arrest."

Then they parted, and the two friends retired to their own homes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the janitor, as he closed up the house that night, "another mystery in the Merry Ten. They don't know that I heard every word said in that little room when the officer was there. Lord bless me! How them young fellows do lie! I heard him say that he knew who the man was, but that he could not give his name—that he had met and fought before, and that he expected that they would meet and fight again. Ha, ha, ha! Master Simcoe, you are now paying for some deviltry of the past from which your wealth and position cannot save you! But what that piece of deviltry is, I am going to find out just as sure as my name is Cerberus. I intend to retire some day on money enough to keep me comfortable when the winter of life shall have come. I've got a good grip on you now, but a stronger one will be worth \$10,000 some day."

Cerberus was a man of splendid courage and great personal strength. But he had no other principle to guide him but a selfish determination to make everything contribute to his inordinate thirst for gold.

A week passed, and nothing more was heard of the masked stranger what had attacked Charlie Pelton on the street. Nearly every evening either Pelton or Jenkins accompanied Simcoe home from the clubrooms, so that he was not left alone at night.

One day Pelton and Jenkins each received a sealed note, which came through the mail.

"A word to the wise is sufficient," read the note, in a strange handwriting. "The companions of a doomed man shall share his fate. If self-preservation is the first law of nature, observe it by keeping out of danger."

(Signed)

"Nemesis."

"Ah, I understand that," said Jenkins, as he read the note carefully. "It's a warning for me to leave poor Simcoe to his fate. I wonder if Pelton received one, too. I will ask him to-night."

When the two young men met at the clubrooms that evening, they eyed each other inquiringly.

"Did you get one, too?" Sam asked of Charlie Pelton.

"I did," and they prepared notes. They were both written by the same hand and were worded exactly alike.

"What are you going to do about it, Charlie?"

"Nothing. I shall go with Sim as often as I see proper to do so, and be prepared to meet this masked devil at any time."

"Good boy! Give me your hand on that!" exclaimed Sam, grasping the hand of his friend.

They shook hands heartily, and agreed to say nothing to Layton about having received the notes, as it would add to his troubles and do him no good. That night they both accompanied him home again, each armed, but they saw nothing of the mysterious mask.

Another week elapsed, and several times one or both of the friends accompanied Layton home. But one evening when a drizzling rain was falling, Simcoe Layton left the club at an hour much earlier than usual, having an appointment to meet a friend uptown.

A few minutes after leaving the clubhouse a man muffed in a heavy cloak, wearing a slouch hat drawn well down over his eyebrows, was observed following him, some thirty or

forty paces behind. But Layton himself did not see the figure. He kept straight on, going near the outer edge of the sidewalk, so as to avoid the dark doorways, in which an assassin could easily be concealed. The darkness and the rain kept many indoors who otherwise would have been on the street, and but few people were met. Sometimes a whole block would be traversed without meeting or seeing a single individual. About half a block in advance of Layton a man was walking, who would cast occasional glances over his shoulder, as if prompted by a spirit of caution. Suddenly, when he reached a block from which a single light streamed from a window, he was observed to spring up by a lamp-post and extinguish the light. Then, under the shadow of darkness, he darted into the doorway of one of the houses.

Layton, thinking that the wind had blown out the light through a broken glass, kept on near the edge of the sidewalk.

Suddenly a masked man darted out in front of him with a gleaming knife in his hand.

"We have met again, Simcoe Layton!" said the man, in a hissing tone of voice.

"But it is not my seeking," replied Layton, promptly drawing his knife, "though I am ready for you—come on!"

The mask made a spring at him—their knives met, and a stream of sparks flew from the polished steel.

Around—around they went, parrying and thrusting.

Clash—clash—clash!

Heavy footsteps ran toward them.

Simcoe saw a huge, muffled figure rushing upon them, and, thinking it was a confederate of his assailant, he turned and ran across the street to the light on the other side, drawing his pistol at the same time. The masked man hissed out:

"You shall not escape me this time!" and started to pursue, but the muffled figure grasped him by the shoulder, and wheeled him around as though he were a mere child, saying:

"Here, take off that mask and show your hand like a man!"

Quick as a flash of lightning, the muffled figure parried a thrust of the bright blade which the mask had made at his heart, and then dealt him a blow square on the forehead that sent him reeling up against the side of the house. But the mask recovered in a moment or two and advanced to the attack again, this time endeavoring to stab the man with the cloak, by nimbly springing forward and then back again out of reach of his fists.

"Oh, ho! That's the game, is it?" exclaimed the muffled figure. "Well, here's at you!" and dashing in, he sent the mask rolling on the pavement by a well directed blow. But he was up again in a trice and drew a pistol and fired full at the muffled man's breast. He then turned and fled, disappearing around the corner like a flash.

"Ugh! I am shot!" growled the muffled man, grasping his left side and staggering back. His cloak fell to the ground, and the slouched hat raised slightly, revealing the form and face of Cerberus.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PLEDGE AND LEMONADE.

The reader will remember that the beautiful Nellie Jenkins, sister of Sam Jenkins, who was engaged to Charlie Pelton, the president of the Merry Ten Club, had granted her lover one week's time in which to sign the pledge, or be dismissed as her accepted suitor. The brother and lover had consulted together, and decided that so far as the lover was concerned she

was decidedly mistress of the situation. All she could do with the brother would be to hold him to his promise to sign the pledge on the condition that Charles Pelton would do the same thing. But with the lover it was different. There she held all the trump cards, for she had said:

"Choose which you will have, the wine glass or Nellie Jenkins; you cannot have both."

He had told her he would drop the glass and cling to her.

Any other lover would have done the same thing under similar circumstances. She was young, beautiful and wealthy, and—he loved her.

On the last day allowed them in which to sign the pledge Nellie had the documents ready for them to sign.

"Now, Sam," said Charlie, "we understand each other, do we?"

"I believe we do," replied Sam, with a knowing smile. "It's lemonade after this."

"But she is never to be any the wiser in regard to its composition?"

"No."

"Nor must you ever go home looking as though you had broken your pledge."

"No."

"Then we sign it with a mental reservation which we will keep to ourselves."

"Yes."

"Very good. Then let's go up to the house. We do this merely to please Nellie, and stop the lectures."

"Yes, that's it. Women always meddle with the affairs of men, where they have no business or right to do so, and men, to keep peace in their families have always had to make a show of yielding to their silly demands. She will never know any better as to how we keep it, and ignorance is bliss, you know."

"But she would never forgive me if she ever found out the game," said Charlie.

"We won't tell, and she'll be sure to hear that we are drinking lemonade at the club," said Sam, chuckling gleefully as they wended their way towards the home of the fair Nellie.

Nellie was waiting for them.

She never looked prettier than when she welcomed her brother and sweetheart that evening. Never was a maid so pleased and happy. Both were noble-looking young men, whose position in society was enviable, to say the least. She was proud of her tall, handsome brother, and deeply, desperately in love with her sweetheart.

Yet, withal, she had a strong head and a will of her own. To do right she would sacrifice her own feelings and inclinations without a moment's hesitation. Pity it is that the world contains so few men and women of that stamp.

She was a moral heroine.

The long hours of the evening wore away pleasantly enough. She played and sang for them, and even joined them in a game of whist.

The hour grew late, and Charlie arose to go.

"Not yet, Charlie," said she, smiling sweetly upon him. "You know you said you would sign the pledge to-night. Have you repented your promise?"

She looked so enchantingly sweet that Charlie caught her in his arms, and pressing her to his heart, kissed her a half dozen times in succession.

"How can you ask me such a question, Nellie?" he said. "Do you think I would give you up for anything in this world? Bring on your pledge as soon as you please."

Nellie's eyes fairly sparkled with joy.

She ran to the piano and drew out from under a pile of sheet music a piece of white paper, on which she had written the pledge of total abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors, in a clear, neat, regular hand.

"Here it is in my own handwriting, Charlie, and I am going to sign it with you!"

Charlie took the paper and carefully read it over.

"Give me the pen," he said.

She handed him her own beautiful gold pen with its tiny pearl staff, and he leaned over on the piano to sign it.

"Wait a moment, please," said Nellie, hastily running out of the room. A moment or two later she returned with her mother to witness the act of signing.

On seeing his mother Sam Jenkins paled and slightly trembled. He could deal with Nellie as with the whims of a wayward girl, but he knew that the grave, kind, motherly face of his mother would haunt him in the future for what he had determined to do.

With a firm and steady hand Charles Pelton signed his name to the pledge, and then laid down the pen.

Nellie sprang into his arms and kissed him.

"Oh, Charlie," she said, "you don't know how happy you have made me."

"I am glad for your sake, Nellie," replied Charlie, "as well as for my own."

"Now, brother," said Nellie, taking up the pen and handing it to Sam, "you promised me you would sign it."

Sam mechanically took the pen, saying:

"Lemonade, Charlie, old fellow. No more drinks—no more rackets with the boys. It's all up with us. Had you held out it would not have been thusly."

"It's better as it is," said Charlie, kissing Nellie for the twentieth time.

"Oh, that's all very well for you," said Sam, laughing; "but I've got no girl to kiss me every time I want a drink."

"My dear son," said his mother, throwing her arms around his neck and pressing her lips to his forehead, "you have gladdened your mother's heart, though, and you should never regret it."

"I am glad I signed it, then, mother," said Sam, "though I don't think there was any need of my doing so. I shall have to drink soda or lemonade hereafter, and be laughed at by all my friends. I don't think Nellie would be willing to wear an unfashionable bonnet to be commented on by all her acquaintances."

"A bonnet, in or out of the fashion, can do one no harm," said Nellie quickly; "but that cannot be said of wine drinking."

"Ha, ha, ha! Sam," laughed Charlie, good naturedly. "She has you there. Better give it up and stick to lemonade."

"Oh, I've signed it, and I am going to keep it," said Sam, dropping down on the sofa; "but I expect it'll be dry work."

"Oh, I'll keep plenty of lemonade in the house for you," said Nellie.

"I'm afraid you don't know how to make it like we do," he said significantly, at which Charlie smiled and looked mysterious.

"Well, you can show me, can you not?" she innocently asked.

"I don't know that we ought to give the secret away. It's very valuable to those in similar circumstances with ourselves," and Charlie chuckled as Sam evaded the proposition.

Nellie was keen of comprehension, and their frequent smiles aroused her apprehensions as to their sincerity, and for a moment a shadow fell across her heart. But she dispelled it by resolving not to doubt them.

Thus the time passed, and Charlie arose to leave. He bade Nellie good-night in a lover-like way, and left the house, promising to meet Sam the next day at the clubrooms of the Merry Ten.

Nellie Jenkins had sweet dreams that night, and the future looked exceedingly bright and hopeful to her. The sequel will

show how a happiness can be marred by the fascinations of a social club.

The next day Sam and Charlie met at the clubrooms. There were only two other members present at the time.

"What shall we have to drink, fellows?" said Arthur De Forrest, leaning back in his easy chair, and lazily puffing his Havana.

"I'll take champagne," said one of the party.

"So will I," said Arthur. "What's yours, Jenkins?"

"I am going to try a new compound which I got hold of clandestinely yesterday," said Sam, taking a little slip of paper and handing it to the waiter, who acted as general drink mixer and waiter to the members. "Just make up a glass of that, according to the letter and spirit of the prescription, and let me see what it tastes like."

The waiter started off to fill the order.

"Make me a glassful, too," said Charlie.

"What do you call it, Sam?" Arthur asked.

"I have no name for it," said Sam. "We'll christen it when we have tasted its merit."

"Where did you get it?"

"Secret."

"Oh—ah!"

The drinks were brought up on a large waiter, two glasses of champagne and two of what looked like ordinary lemonade.

"Hello, Sam!" cried Arthur De Forrest, staring at the glasses. "Weakening, old fellow?"

"Not much!" replied Sam, smiling significantly, as he took up the glass and sipped it.

"Eureka!" he cried, lifting the glass above his head and dancing around the room. "I've hit it—I've knocked the pledge clear out of sight."

Charley quickly took up his glass and tasted its contents. Smacking his lips with great satisfaction, he quietly set down the glass and grasping the hand of his intended brother-in-law, said:

"A thousand blessings on your head, my benefactor. You have saved me."

Sam fell upon his neck and wept, melodramatically, of course, which piece of acting the other two friends greatly relished.

"Here, make up two more glasses of that stuff," said Arthur to the waiter, "and let's see where the good of it is."

The two glasses were made up and brought to them, and slowly drank.

"Fellows," exclaimed Arthur, "I'll contribute generously to buy a testimonial of gratitude to the author of that drink."

"So will I," said the others.

"I'm the chap," said Sam, laughing, extending his hand towards them. "A thousand apiece, if you please."

"A fraud—a fraud!" chorused the others. "Give us another glass, and let's name it!"

Another glass for each was compounded.

They drank it with infinite gusto, and felt its effect even quicker than straight champagne.

"We will call it the Merry Ten Flipper," said Sam.

And so they did.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOUNDED JANITOR.

Let us now return to Cerberus, whom, it will be remembered, we left reeling and staggering from a bullet wound in the side, fired by the mysterious man in the mask.

"Perdition!" he hissed, clutching his side spasmodically. "I

am shot, and the coward has got away! Here comes everybody to see what it means. They shall not know that I am shot if I die for it."

Of course a pistol shot in the streets of New York was never known to fail to draw people to the spot to see who did it. Nearly a dozen made for the place at once, to find only one man there quietly picking up a cloak from the pavement.

"Who fired that shot?" demanded an excited policeman, rushing up with the others, for a wonder.

"I don't know," quietly replied Cerberus. "A fellow came up to me, and putting a pistol to my breast demanded my purse, and because I knocked him down instead he sprang up, fired at me, and then ran around the corner there."

"Did he hit you?"

"No," promptly replied Cerberus.

"Did you see his face?" the policeman asked.

"How could I, in this darkness?"

"Can you give any description of the man?"

"He was about my height, but not so stout, with rather sharp features, I thought, though I may be mistaken. But I think I would know him again."

"Give me your name and address," said the officer. "If we catch him we will send for you."

Cerberus gave a fictitious name and address, of course, for it was not his object to be known in the affair. He then turned and wended his way back towards the Merry Ten clubhouse.

"Ten thousand curses on this thing," he muttered, pressing his hand against his side. "I am bleeding like an ox in the slaughter pen. I feel the blood filling my boot. I may have my death wound for all I know. Hang it all! I had Sim in my power, and could have forced the secret out of him without following him just to get shot for my pains. Ugh! I am growing weak."

With great self-possession, and the exercise of tremendous will power, he walked into a saloon and called for a glass of brandy. He drank it, paid for it, and then walked out of the place without any one of the score of men present suspecting that he was shot and bleeding copiously from the wound.

Out on the street again, he made rapid strides for the clubhouse. In ten minutes he was at the door. Entering, he called to the colored waiter and general mixer of drinks, and asked:

"How many are there in the house now?"

"Several, sir; but they will all go soon," replied the waiter. "Are you ill?"

"Yes, I am sick; don't let anybody know it, though. Come up to my room as soon as they go."

"Must I close up the house for you?"

"Yes," and Cerberus passed up the stairs toward his room, the blood in his boot actually making a noise he could plainly hear as he stepped.

In his room he quickly took a drink of brandy from a convenient bottle, and then threw off his coat and vest. His shirt and vest were crimson with bloodstains. The bullet had ploughed a long furrow along his left side, and passed out through the back of his coat.

A glance in the mirror convinced him that it was only an ugly flesh wound, and that he was in no danger from it. He went into the bathroom, stripped, bathed until the bleeding ceased, and then tore up a sheet to get bandages to tie around his body. Turning off the bloodstained water, he took up his drenched clothing and went back to his room, where he lay down and patiently waited for the waiter below to close up the house and bring him the keys.

He had not long to wait.

The waiter came up with a glass of the new drink which he

had compounded from the prescription given him by Sam Jenkins.

"Are they all gone, Nicodemus?" asked Cerberus, as the waiter entered and set the glass on the table near the head of the bed.

"Yes, sir, all gone," was the reply, as the keys jingled on the table by the glass.

"What's in that glass?"

"That's the Merry Ten Flipper," replied Nicodemus, with a broad grin on his ebony countenance.

"It is, eh? Well, look here, if ever you bring me a glass of lemonade like that when I want a drink, I'll show you a different kind of a flipper altogether. I'll flip you out the fourth-story window."

"Not much you wouldn't," chuckled Nicodemus, "not if you tasted the lemonade. Just try that glass, Mr. Cerberus."

The janitor looked askance at the grinning waiter, reached out his hand, and mechanically took up the glass. He tossed it off in an offhand way, and then smacked his lips as though testing its flavor.

"By the Lord Harry, Nicodemus!" he exclaimed, setting down the glass, "that is a royal drink—who made it?"

"I did."

"But where did you get the idea from?"

"Mr. Sam Jenkins."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir, and it is just all the rage downstairs. I've been told that to divulge the secret of its composition would put a mansard roof over my eye."

"Who told you that?"

"All of 'em—they say it must belong to the club alone."

"They do, eh? Well, that is just like those fellows. But, see here, Nicodemus, I am quite sick. I want you to go for a doctor for me."

"Of course I will, but I didn't know you were so bad off as that," and Nicodemus put on his hat, took the front door key, and hurried out of the room.

In half an hour he returned with a physician, whom he showed into the room.

"Good-evening, sir," said the man of medicine, taking a seat by the side of the bed. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nicodemus," said Cerberus, "go downstairs and bring up two more glasses of lemonade."

Nicodemus instantly disappeared from the room.

"Doctor," said Cerberus, "can you keep a secret?"

"I can, sir," answered the physician, in evident surprise, "but I will not agree to keep one of a criminal nature."

"Very good. I have a secret which you must know before you can prescribe for me. I assure you that there is nothing criminal about it on my part, but absolute silence as regards the matter is necessary to assure the arrest of the ones who are really criminal."

"Then I will promise to keep your secret," said the doctor.

"Very well. Two hours ago I was shot in the street, and ——"

"You were—where?"

"In the left side."

"By whom?"

"I know not, but if I keep secret the fact that I was hit, I am sure to find out. I have a clew. Will you dress the wound for me?"

"Yes," and the physician at once proceeded to examine the hurt.

"Wait until Nicodemus comes and goes, doctor. He will suspect something."

"Is this the Merry Ten clubhouse?" the doctor asked.

"Yes, and I am the janitor," replied Cerberus.

The doctor bowed his head in acknowledgment of the information.

Nicodemus soon returned with the two glasses of lemonade, which he deposited on the table.

"Wait downstairs for the doctor, Nick," said Cerberus, and the waiter retired on getting the hint.

"Do you ever drink anything, doctor?" asked the janitor.

"Nothing stronger than lemonade or soda," said the physician. "I am a strong temperance man."

"Then you will like this lemonade. It is quite a favorite drink with the young men of the Merry Ten club."

The doctor took up the glass and slowly drained it of its contents. He looked wise, glanced at Cerberus half-inquisitively, and then set it down on the table without uttering a word.

"Now, let me see your hurt," he said, rising and leaning over the bed on which the athlete was reclining on his right side. "Ah, it's an ugly flesh wound, I see. Who dressed it for you?"

"I did it myself in the bathroom," was the reply.

"You are certainly a man of great endurance."

"It was necessary to preserve my secret."

The wound was properly dressed after careful inspection.

He then bade his patient good-night, and followed Nicodemus downstairs to the front door.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TWO FRIENDS WITH TWO SECRETS.

On retreating across the street on the approach of the supposed accomplice, or confederate, of the man in the mask, Simcoe Layton merely looked back once to see if he were pursued by either of them. To his surprise, they made no attempt to follow him.

"They are afraid to follow me into the glare of gaslight and make the attack," he said to himself, and when he reached the curbing on the other side of the street he turned and listened.

"Why, blame me if I don't think they are fighting," he said, a moment later. "If that wasn't a knockdown, then I don't know one when I hear it—there—a pistol shot! There'll be a murder. I won't be mixed up in it if I can help it," and turning, he walked briskly up the street, meeting a number of people who were running down to see what the trouble was. In a few moments he was three blocks away, walking rapidly toward his home.

Suddenly the thought occurred to him that if he could stop in a certain well-known saloon near where he then was, he might hear something of the shooting. He entered, and met two or three young men there whom he knew.

"Hello, Sim!" they cried. "Just in time! Have some beer."

"Yes," he said, seating himself at a table with them, and calling for a glass of beer.

An hour passed, and as he did not hear from the shooting, he came to the conclusion that no one was hurt. He arose to leave, and as he started toward the door, he was surprised to see it open and Jenkins and Pelton enter.

"Hello, Sim!" they cried. "You here?"

"Yes; I was going home, and dropped in here a moment or two."

"We missed you and thought you were gone home," said Sam.

"Well, I was just going to leave. Are you going up that way?"

"Yes."

"Have some wine before you—"

"No, nothing," interrupted Charlie, quickly. "We are on lemonade now, you know."

"They can't make such lemonade here, I guess," remarked Simcoe, smiling, as he lit a cigar and walked out of the saloon with them.

"I say, Sim," said Pelton, when they reached the sidewalk, "we heard just now that a man had been attacked and shot in the street by an unknown man, and we thought of you at once. Did anybody shoot at you?"

"Why, no—I am all right," and he smiled again. "Was anybody hurt?"

"I think not."

"Well, he didn't shoot me, I guess," said Simcoe, "or I would have returned the compliment in kind."

On the way uptown Charlie Pelton left them, and retired to his home, leaving Layton and Jenkins together.

The hour was very late when they parted, and very few people were on the streets, though here and there small groups of young men who kept late hours like themselves, were seen returning homeward, or else seeing pleasure where the tipsy god, Bacchus, still reigned. Some were singing familiar songs and making as much noise as they could without causing the police to interfere.

"You haven't heard anything from your masked friend since that last attack he made on you, eh, Sim?" asked Sam of Layton as they walked arm in arm up the street.

"No!" nor had he. He told the truth, though he would have told a falsehood just the same, as he had resolved to say nothing about the matter that would in any way be information to anybody.

"Of course, you know who it is?" Sam remarked. "Why not tell the whole story at once and relieve a fellow's curiosity?"

"Every man has his secret, Sam," replied Layton, "and every one, if he has lived in some large city as we do, has done something to be repented of. I know that I have, and believe that it is the case with every fellow in the Merry Ten. But none of us like to go about making confessions, eh, old fellow?"

"That may be all true, Sim, but none of us have such an exciting history with a mystery that you have."

"Don't say that, Sam," retorted Simcoe, "for you have excited my curiosity as much as anything or anybody that I know of, and—"

"Who—I?"

"Yes—you."

"I really can't understand you, Sim."

"Well, I will make myself plain to you, then. Do you recollect the night when you drank so deeply at the club, when Cerberus had to take you upstairs?"

"Yes."

"Well, that night you got wild, leaped upon the table, pointed at something which you described as a woman in white, with blood-stains on her dress, and cried out like one speaking, terror-stricken, to an accusing ghost: 'I didn't do it! I didn't do it!' and then fell down in a swoon. I knew that there was a secret back of all that, Sam, as I have had the shadow of one wronged coming to me, as you well know, but I have never asked you to reveal to me the secret."

While he was speaking they passed a gas lamp, and Layton noticed the deadly pallor on the face of Sam Jenkins.

"I—have—no—secret!" said Sam, in a hollow tone.

"I know better. But it's yours—not mine. I have one that is mine—not yours. So you see that we are even."

Sam was exceedingly nervous and sharply reiterated that he had no secret.

"What was the ghost, shadow or vision? And why did you cry out that you didn't do it? You see, I understand all that sort of thing, Sam, and know that every man, more or less,

has a secret. We are friends—have been so for years. Tell me your secret, and I will tell you mine."

"No—no—no! I have none to tell!" cried Sam, quickly. "I don't know any secret. I suppose I—I had the jim-jams on me that night, which accounts for my strange actions. I was too drunk to know what I was saying or doing."

"You were pretty full I know. But there were no jim-jams about it, Sam. The delirium tremens makes a man see snakes and creeping things—but principally snakes of all sizes and colors—but never ghosts—women in white. You see, I have been there, Sam, and know something about it myself."

"Yes, yes, only I have none," and the pallor on Sam's face deepened as he spoke.

"I had a strange, funny dream about you last night," said Layton. "Do you believe in dreams, Sam?"

"I don't know that I do," and he drew a long sigh of relief, hoping that the subject was changed.

"Well, I dreamed that I saw you going along up the street, and called to you, but you didn't hear me. I started on a brisk walk to overtake you, when suddenly you disappeared through a coal hole, and—"

A frenzied yell burst from Sam's lips, and he sprang aside, as though stricken a terrible blow. The next moment he drew a knife and sprang at Layton's throat, hissing through his clenched teeth like a fiery serpent:

"Though you were a thousand times my friend, you shall die, Simcoe Layton!" and once, twice, three times he made desperate lunges at his throat with the knife.

But the constant danger he had been compelled to guard against had made Layton quick and decisive in his movements. His astonishment at Jenkins' actions did not throw him off his guard, for he easily and quickly parried every blow.

"Die! Die!" savagely hissed Sam, pressing him until Layton succeeded in knocking the knife out of his hand. Sam then flew at him with clenched hands, just as a young man ran in between them, with a white, scared face.

"Sam! Sam!" cried the young man, and the next moment he fell to the ground with a shriek that sounded strangely like a woman's voice.

Sam's fist had come down heavily on the head of the young stranger.

"Sam! Sam!" cried Layton. "Look! Look! It is a woman!"

They both stepped over and pushed the hat back from the white, marble-looking forehead.

Sam gave a gasp and staggered back as if shot.

"Who was she?

CHAPTER XVI.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

As Sam Jenkins staggered backwards from the young woman in disguise, Simeon Layton removed the hat, and long tresses of hair fell to the ground, and in the lineaments of the white face he recognized—Nellie Jenkins, the sister of Sam, and the affianced wife of Charlie Pelton.

"My God!" he gasped. "It is your sister, Sam!"

Sam pressed his head against his forehead and reeled like a drunken man.

"Is she dead?" he gasped.

"No; only stunned," replied Sim.

Just then several persons came up toward them. Simcoe quickly replaced the hat on her head, crammed the long silken tresses back under it, and lifted her in his arms.

"Sam," he whispered, "let's save her reputation from those

follows coming this way, and then we can have our fight out some other time, if you wish to do so."

"Yes, yes," replied Sam, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Shall we take her home?"

"No—no; not now."

"Where then?"

"To a hotel! Anywhere until she can recover. My God! My God! What does all this mean?"

"I don't know."

"There is one across the way over there, Simcoe, shall we go over there?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then—go in and get a room for a young fellow who has been taking too much. That will disarm suspicion."

Sam did as he was told in a mechanical sort of a way, and in a few minutes they were shown up two flights of stairs into a very comfortable room.

Layton deposited the unconscious Nellie on a bed, and then, having more presence of mind than Sam, who seemed utterly overwhelmed, he quickly seized a glass of water from the washstand in the corner of the room, and dashed it in her face. She started very perceptibly, and then uttered a groan.

"She is coming to, Sam," said Layton. "Don't say anything harsh to her—poor thing."

"Layton," said Sam, dropping into a chair, as great drops of sweat stood like beads on his forehead, "I can never survive this night. Life has been a burden to me, and now it is more than I can bear. My secret, about which we quarreled, shall die with me. This secret about Nellie, only you and I know it. I will trust to your honor to respect it for the sake of her mother."

"I will do that, Sam, for your sake, for her sake, and everybody else whose interest in her is—"

"Forgive me for my impulsiveness, Sim. I was wild out there when you mentioned about dreaming that you saw me fall through a coal hole. But it is all past now," and the two friends shook hands in a friendly manner.

"I couldn't understand you, Sam," said Layton, wringing his hand, "but I supposed I had trod on your corns some way. I don't know anything, nor do I wish to know anything about your secret. Let's be friends in the future, as we have been in the past."

A groan from Nellie attracted Layton's attention, and he turned quickly around and went to the bedside. As he did so, he looked across the room toward a mirror which hung on the wall, and Sam Jenkins raised his knife above his head, as though to plunge it to the hilt in his breast.

Quick as a flash, he sprang back, grasped the uplifted arm, and wrenched the murderous knife from his hand, saying, as he did so:

"You shall not die such a cowardly death in my presence, Sam Jenkins! Nobody but a coward would commit suicide!"

Sam buried his face in his hands and dropped into a chair. He groaned and wept like a child.

"Be a man, Sam!" said Layton. "You will be glad I frustrated your designs some day. Wait and hear Nellie's explanation. She is recovering all right again. Keep up a good countenance for her sake."

"Oh, heavens, they are fighting!" muttered Nellie, looking wild and scared, as she sprang up suddenly on the bed. "Look—look! They have drawn their knives—oh, God—they will kill each other—Sam—Sam!" and as she called the name of her brother he sprang up, and rushing to the bedside clasped her in his arms.

"Nellie—Nellie! My darling sister!" he faltered. "What does this mean? Speak—tell me!"

"Why, where am I, Sam—is it you—are you hurt?" cried Nellie, suddenly recognizing her brother.

"No, Nellie, I am not hurt, except to see you in this dress

on the streets of New York at midnight. What does it mean?"

Nellie looked down at herself, and then up at the two young men who stood silently regarding her. Then the death-like pallor left her face and a rosy—yea, crimson tide of blushing confusion swept over it. She sank down on the edge of the bed, buried her face in her hands, and, woman-like, burst into a flood of tears. At this Sam groaned aloud in his anguish.

He thought his fair young sister guilty of—walking the streets of New York disguised as a young man.

Suddenly Nellie lifted her head, and looking at them both, said:

"I have done nothing wrong."

Sam groaned again.

"Brother, I will tell you all, and I know Mr. Layton will respect my secret."

"Yes—as I would my life," said Layton. "I know that you are incapable of doing a wrong, Miss Nellie. You need not make any explanations on my account."

"But I must—I will," said she energetically, "and you must hear me, too, Mr. Layton. You know Charlie and I are engaged to be married. Well, I thought he and brother were drinking too much wine, and so I made them sign the pledge. But when they signed it I thought I could detect some kind of a secret understanding between them that puzzled me. I heard them make several sarcastic allusions to lemonade that aroused my suspicions, and so resolved to watch them. You can now understand my present disguise."

Sam looked up and stared at his sister like one in a dream. He seemed relieved of a terrible burden on his mind. He sprang up, took her in his arms, and kissed her.

"Saved—saved!" he cried. "Oh, Nellie, I could have died with despair when I knew it was you."

"I am glad, then—and now, my dear brother, I watched both you and Charlie in the clubhouse all the evening, and noticed that you drank nothing but lemonade. Even when you went into that saloon, where you found Mr. Layton, you refused to drink. I am perfectly satisfied now that you and Charlie intend to keep your pledge, and beg pardon for having doubted you."

Simcoe Layton could scarcely refrain from laughing outright at the allusion to the Merry Ten Flipper, for it was a glorious piece of deception that would floor the stoutest toper when frequently taken.

"You will not think any the less of me, Mr. Layton?" said Nellie. "You cannot appreciate the interest I have in those two men—a brother, and a lover whom I am soon to marry."

"I can fully appreciate it, Miss Nellie," said Layton, "for it has been my fate to know that woman can die for the man she loves, no matter how unworthy he may be," and bowing low, he was about to leave the room, when she called him back.

"But, now, another thing is on my mind that troubles me. You two have always been good friends. Why, then, did you fight each other to-night?"

"Oh, that was my hasty temper over a little matter between us. We have shaken hands over it," said Sam, "and will never allude to it again."

"Oh, I am so glad," and Nellie looked the happiness she really felt.

"I will leave you now," said Simcoe, again starting to leave.

"No—come, go with us—stay with me to-night," said Sam.

"I thank you, but I must yet write two letters before I sleep, so I am forced to decline your hospitality to-night—good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Layton left the brother and sister together, and departed to his home. A minute later and Sam, with Nellie by his side, left at another door, reaching their own home in a

quarter of an hour, where they entered without being seen by any member of the family.

CHAPTER XVII.

FATHER AND SON.

The next morning Sam Jenkins met his sister at the breakfast table, and noticed that she had combed her hair down closely over her temples.

"Why, Nellie!" her mother said, "you look as old fashioned as your grandmother did sixty years ago, with your hair combed that way."

Nellie smiled, and said:

"I didn't think it would make me look so odd."

Sam followed her into the parlor, where he said:

"Nell, I want to know if you are going to follow us again?" She looked surprised.

"Why, no; but why do you ask?"

"Because if you do I must tell Charlie all about it, and—"

"No, no, no, brother!" she interrupted quickly. "Don't tell him, for I am now satisfied. But he and you act so strangely that I thought I would satisfy myself that you were keeping the pledge in good faith. Oh, brother, you know not how I love him, and how I tremble at the thought of ever becoming the wife of a man who drinks."

"Well, well, I won't tell him if you will promise never to do such a foolish thing again," said Sam, after a pause of several minutes. "Do you know I could have killed myself last night when I saw who you were?"

"I will promise never to do so again; only don't tell Charlie about it. He would never forgive me for it."

"There, I won't say a word about it, Nell; only don't you ever do such a thing again, as it would forever ruin your reputation were it known to the young men."

"Do you think Mr. Layton will keep the secret?"

"Oh, yes; he'll never say a word about it."

Sam put on his hat and overcoat, and was about to leave the house when his father came into the room, and said:

"I want to see you in the library before you go out this morning."

"Yes, sir; I am at your service now," promptly replied Sam.

"Meet me there, then, in five minutes from now," said his father, looking at his watch as he left the room.

Nellie looked up at her brother, and asked:

"What can he want of you, brother?"

"I have no idea," he replied, "unless it is to talk over that Grimes business again."

"I fear something is wrong. I never saw father look so troubled."

Sam met his father in the library, and seated himself near a table on which lay books and the morning papers.

"Sam," said his father, laying down his spectacles and looking him full in the face, "how much money have you got?"

Sam started, and turned pale.

"Great heavens!" he mentally exclaimed. "Has he suspected me? Have they found out anything about Martha Perigord's case?"

"How much money have you?" his father repeated.

"I—I don't know, sir," he falteringly replied. "I believe I have some little left yet."

"How did you get it?"

"Borrowed it," he said, suddenly becoming composed on seeing that his father was trying to make him commit himself to something.

"You did, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much have you borrowed in all?"

"About one thousand, I believe."

"Who did you borrow it from?"

"I am not disposed to tell my friend's name."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know your object in asking me such questions."

The elder Jenkins looked at his son several minutes in silence, and then asked:

"What will you do when it is gone?"

"I don't know, sir," Sam replied. "Borrow again, I guess."

"But how will you repay—which you will be called upon to do some day?"

Sam saw the drift of the questions, and began to grow desperate.

"I let the future take care of itself," he replied.

"But the future will not pay your debts unless you show up something for it."

"When I can't pay my debts," said Sam, in hard, bitter tones, "I will cancel them by blowing out my brains."

"Ah! I am glad to see you have sense of honor left—some sensitiveness about it," said his father, rubbing his hands briskly. "I hope you have some ambition in life—some aim in view?"

Sam made no reply.

He hung his head in silence.

"Now, my son," said the old man, "I want to talk calmly with you, and I want you to listen to what I say."

"I have always done that, father."

"So you have; but you have not heeded my advice. Now, I have no desire to waste any breath on you. You are now of age and have no business. If you had millions at your command it would not be so bad; but having no prospects save what I shall leave you at my death—and I intend to live a long time yet, my boy—it is simply disreputable. You spend about five thousand a year, with no income to back it up. Business men will look upon you as worthless, and regard you as a gambler or something worse. Now, I am not going to pay your debts, nor leave you a penny in my will unless you show me that you deserve it. If you will not go into business with Grimes, select some other business, with a careful business man to assist you, and I will put fifty thousand dollars into the business in your name, and pay all your debts for you. Now, what will you do?"

This firm stand taken by his father took Sam by surprise. He knew not what reply to make, and for a time was silent. But second thought came to his aid, and he said:

"I will go into business—but not with Grimes."

"What business, then, will you choose?"

"I don't know yet, but will look around and fix upon something."

"Very well. I will give you a reasonable length of time. The choice you make must be a steady, honest, thorough-going business man."

"Very well. I will submit everything to you, and be guided by you."

"That's right. Show to the world that you cannot only keep a fortune, but make one as well, and men will think more of you, and be ready to place capital at your disposal when you need it."

Thus ended the interview with his father. Sam went up to his room, and carefully locked the door. He then opened his trunk and went to the bottom of it. The box of money and jewels was safe. He opened and took from it a thousand dollars, closed, locked it, and replaced it in the bottom of his trunk, which he likewise locked carefully.

"What did father want of you, brother?" Nellie asked, as she caught him in the hall.

"Oh, he wanted to talk about that Grimes business again,"

said Sam, "but I told him I would not touch Grimes, but would go into some other business with some other man."

"You did? What did he say to that?"

"Oh, it tickled him almost to death, and I am to look around for something that will pay."

"You will go into business, then?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Brother, can't you persuade Charlie to do so, too?"

"See here, Nell, why don't you go in for making a preacher out of Pelton? I'd make a bishop out of him if I were you."

Nellie blushed crimson and ran away, and Sam put on his hat and left the house.

"The old man has got his back up," muttered Sam to himself, as he walked down the street, "and means business. Lord, how he did frighten me when he commenced on me. I was afraid he had found out something, and was trying to catch me on a hitch. But he doesn't know a thing, nor Sim Layton, either. But that dream was curious. It set me almost wild. But what shall I do? I've money enough to last me ten years at five thousand a year, or to start me in a good business. I don't know how much the diamonds will bring, but it would be a large sum if sold by a square dealer. I'll talk with Charlie, and see what he thinks about going into business."

It was evening again before he met Charlie. He then told him of his interview with his father that morning, and said:

"He means business, Charlie, and won't take any taffy."

"And he is right, Sam," said Charlie. "His head is perfectly level on that thing. The best thing you can do is to settle down into a plodding, go-ahead business man."

"I suppose that advice won't hold good in your case, eh?"

"Yes, it will. I am going into business, too, before I marry."

"The deuce you are! Has the old man been talking to you, too?"

"Yes; and we agreed very well on the course to be pursued."

"Oh, that sly Nell," laughed Sam. "She's at the bottom of all this. By the way, Charlie, she is a little suspicious about that lemonade. You must be cautious and not say anything about it in her presence."

"Has anybody given us away?"

"No; only she thought we were having a little underground traffic in that lemonade when we were talking about it on the night we signed the pledge."

"She's as sharp as a needle," and Charlie smiled as he passed the compliment. "I guess I'll have to give up the lemonade when we marry."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CORNERED.

The next day after receiving his wound, the janitor of the Merry Ten Clubhouse was too ill to attend to his duties. He bargained with Nicodemus, the waiter, to perform his duties for him at a stipulated price.

Several of the members called on him in his room, among them Simcoe Layton himself, the unconscious cause of the wound.

"What's the matter, Cerberus?" Layton asked.

"I hardly know," said the janitor. "The doctor said last night that my whole system was badly deranged. I suppose I will be all right again in a few days."

"Oh, I guess you will," said Sim; but when he left the room, he muttered: "But I'd gladly bear all the funeral ex-

penses and throw in a monument, if you'd only kick the bucket."

The doctor called for several days in succession, and dressed the wound and tested the merit of the Merry-Ten Flipper. Such lemonade he had never before tasted. He always went away feeling that it was good—glorious to have such a patient as the janitor of the clubhouse. But the time came when Cerberus could no longer remain a patient. He got well, paid the bill, and dismissed his physician.

He noticed that Sam Jenkins did not get drunk any more, and that Charlie Pelton drank less than formerly, and wondered what had come over them of late.

He found a chance to whisper to Simcoe Layton, as he sat at cards with three others one evening:

"Come up to my room before you go home?"

Layton changed color slightly, and nodded his head.

In about an hour he passed quietly upstairs to the janitor's room. Cerberus was there waiting for him.

"What do you want, Cerberus?" he asked.

"I want to know if you have done as you promised?"

"No," was the blunt reply.

"Why not?"

"For two reasons—lack of inclination and opportunity."

"The devil! Do you mean to say that you have no inclination to do it?"

"I do."

"By the Lord Harry, if you don't do it within a week I'll have you in jail as a common pickpocket."

"And I'll swear you got half the money!" retorted Layton.

This staggered Cerberus.

"But I have not so much to lose as you," he said.

"No; but it is as much to you as mine is to me," and with that he turned and left the room, leaving the astonished Cerberus alone.

"By my soul, if he doesn't dare me to do it!" muttered the janitor, "and I'll be hanged if I don't teach him a lesson he will not soon forget!"

That evening Sam Jenkins and Simcoe Layton walked home together.

"Sam, meet me at the club to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock on special business," said Layton, at parting.

"Promptly," answered Sam, as they shook hands.

They met at the hour to the minute.

"Sam," said Layton, when they were seated alone, "three weeks ago you lost a thousand dollars, did you not?"

"Yes," and Sam started with surprise; "but how did you find it out? I said not a word to any one about it."

"I accidentally found out that Cerberus had it, and prevailed upon him to return it. He gave it to me because I threatened his arrest and his dismissal from his position. But I promised not to let any one know it but you, and that he would not lose his position in consequence of it. Here is the money, and I hope you will make my promise to him good by not saying anything about it to the others."

Sam was astounded.

He took the roll of bills and stowed them away in his pocket.

"Layton," he said, "you are a brick. I will remember this kindness. I said nothing about the loss at the time, as I feared that it would injure, or cast reflection on the reputation of the club. But Cerberus will never forgive you. He will be your deadliest foe after this."

"Yes, I know that, but I am not afraid of him."

"It won't do for you ever to get full and fall into his hands again."

"No, I will look out for that," and the two friends shook hands and went out for a stroll.

In the evening they went to the theater, and did not reach

the club until quite late. They found a number of visitors present, enjoying themselves and making the time pass pleasantly.

"I want to see you," said Cerberus, as he passed behind Layton, during the evening.

Layton wheeled around and followed him.

"What about?" he asked.

"I want five hundred dollars," said Cerberus.

"Well, what's that to me?"

"I'll give you away unless you come down with it."

"Very well, the sooner the better. Jenkins—here a moment please."

Jenkins responded promptly.

"What is it, Sim?" he asked.

"Cerberus has something he wishes to say to you in my presence," said Layton.

"No, no! Not now! Some other time will do!" said Cerberus, completely upset by the cool bravery of Simcoe Layton.

"Very well—any time will do, Cerberus, old fellow," said Sam, very good naturedly, as he and Layton turned away from the janitor.

"Perdition!" hissed Cerberus. "What does he mean by defying me? Does he think that I dare not do it for fear of incriminating myself? By the Lord Harry, he does not know me if he does. I will give him until to-morrow to come down with the money, and if he does not I will give him dead away to Sam Jenkins."

While wending their way home at a late hour, Layton and Jenkins talked over the matter of Cerberus and the robbery.

"Do you know he tried to blackmail me to-night?" said Layton. *

"How?"

"I don't know. He said that he had me where he could ruin me, and that \$500 alone would save me, or else he would tell you and the other members of the club. I called you up for him to execute the threat, but he backed down and would not say a word."

"By George, the rascal must leave the club!" exclaimed Sam. "Such impudence cannot be tolerated."

"I think so myself, but let's wait and see what he will do."

"Well, then, we will put him out," added Sam; "though he has a good grip on us, you know, and could ruin our club if he can make the public believe him."

"But the public would not believe him. We could all sign a card that would overwhelm him forever."

The next evening Cerberus made another demand on Layton.

"Not a cent!" was the emphatic reply.

"Then you are a ruined man, Simcoe Layton!" hissed Cerberus.

"Go ahead, old fellow. I can stand as much as you can."

An hour later Cerberus requested Jenkins to meet him in his room, as he desired to see him on important business.

Sam went up a few minutes later, followed by Simcoe, and they both entered the room together.

"What do you want here, Mr. Layton?" growled the janitor.

"I want to see this thing through, old fellow; that's all," replied Layton.

"You just get out, or I'll pitch you downstairs."

"No, you won't, either."

Cerberus darted toward him to make good his threat.

"Stop!" cried Layton, aiming a revolver at his head. "Another step, and what few brains you have in that black mud-sill of a head will be scattered all over this room. Now, tell that thing straight, or I'll show you what it is to fool with me."

Cerberus recoiled.

There was death in Layton's eye.

He dared not move an inch forward.

"How's this, Cerberus?" Jenkins asked.

Cerberus made no reply.

"Layton give me back the money you stole from me, and said—"

"That I stole?" exclaimed the janitor, as if suddenly stung.

"Yes; and which he made you give up on pain of dismissal and arrest," said Sam. "He says that now you are trying to blackmail him with some terrible secret you hold over him. I want to tell you that that kind of thing is played out here."

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Cerberus, glaring savagely at Layton, under whose pistol he still cowered, "did you tell him that?"

"I did," replied Layton, firmly.

"When you knew it was false?"

"False! Ha, ha, ha! Cerberus, we all know you here. You can't impose on any one of the Merry Ten."

"By heavens, I'll murder you!"

"Stop—do you think I would let you get your hands on me as long as I hold this weapon? Move an inch and you are a dead man. Now, shall I tell Sam of your plot against him?"

"Out with it!" exclaimed Sam, quickly drawing his revolver and leveling it at the janitor's head. "If he moves I will perforate him through and through! Your days as janitor of this house are numbered, my fine fellow. Anything you can say about us won't hurt anybody, for we can all publish a card that will settle your hash."

With a yell of rage, Cerberus seized a chair and hurled it at Layton's head, and then dashed at Sam Jenkins, putting out the light as he passed it, leaving them in total darkness.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEATH OF CERBERUS.

On finding the light in the room mysteriously extinguished, Sam Jenkins and Simcoe Layton at once darted towards the door which opened into the hall or corridor.

The door was locked, but Sam deftly turned the key and opened the door, thus giving sufficient light from the gas jet which burned in the corridor, to enable them to discover Cerberus with a bright-bladed dirk-knife in his hand. Jenkins quickly leveled his pistol at him.

"Drop that, or down you go!" he said, coolly.

The enraged janitor glared defiantly at him.

Layton also leveled his revolver at him.

"It's all up with you, Cerberus," said he. "You'll go up for attempted murder."

"Drop that knife, I say!" sternly commanded Jenkins, "or I'll put half a dozen bullets through you in just one minute."

The knife dropped from the hand of the janitor and stuck on its point in the floor.

"Now get back into the corner there!" said Sam.

Being powerless to resist, the burly janitor did as he was ordered, with a scowl on his face that boded no good to the two young men should he ever be able to turn the tables on them.

"Hold up both your hands!" sternly commanded Sam.

Up went both hands above his head.

"Move an inch without my permission, and you are a dead black man. Sim, take up that knife, please, and hand it to

Layton took up the knife and handed it to Jenkins.

"Now go for a policeman."

Simcoe looked at Sam in evident surprise.

"Do you mean it?" he asked.

"Of course I do! Hasn't the rascal tried to kill us both?"

"But hadn't we better see the others about it first?" said Layton, evidently unwilling to go to the extent of invoking any other law than the will of the club.

"What may they have to do with it?" Sam asked. "He picked my pocket and then tried to murder me. I will put him where he will do the state some service, or my name is not Sam Jenkins."

"Ha, ha, ha! I won't go there alone," said Cerberus, with a harsh chuckle. "The Merry Ten will be a Merry Ten no more if I go there."

"I guess we had better see the other fellows about it first!" said Layton, shaking his head at Sam.

"You may do as you please," said Sam, determinedly, "but I am going to rid the club of this fellow. We've allowed him to rule the roost too long. Stop—hands up! If you attempt any tricks with me I'll blow out your piggish brains."

"Just wait until I call up Pelton," and Simcoe Layton left the room, going down the stairs three steps at a time. The next moment half a dozen members of the Merry Ten, with Charlie Pelton at their head, came bounding up the stairs.

"Great hewgags, Sam!" exclaimed Charlie. "What does this mean?"

"It means that Cerberus is no longer the janitor of the Merry Ten," said Sam.

"The devil! Who discharged him?"

"I did, of will," he replied, "which is all the same."

"But what's the matter? Why do you keep him in that position?"

"Stand back! Keep out of my way! The rascal has been shaking a rod of iron over us for a long time, and just now he made an attempt on my life. Who will call a policeman?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, call an officer," said Cerberus, with a dry, cynical laugh. "You can all afford to do it."

"See here, fellows," said Arthur DeForrest, "let's settle this privately among ourselves, if we can, without getting into court with it. It won't do, you know."

"The devil it won't!" exclaimed Sam.

"No, you know it won't, Sam Jenkins, for it would forever kill the club."

"Then let the club die!"

Cerberus very deliberately dropped his hands to his sides and laughed sardonically.

"Stop where you are until I am done with you!" ordered Sam, and the janitor dropped into a chair near by.

"Now, see here, fellows," said Sam, to those around him, "there's a majority of us here. I move that we discharge him at once."

"I second the motion," said Layton.

"But this isn't a business meeting of the club," said DeForrest.

"No, but the suspension can be made now, and the regular business meeting will endorse the action."

"How know you that?"

"Because the Merry Ten will not keep a pickpocket as janitor of their clubrooms!" exclaimed Sam.

"A pickpocket!" cried several at once.

"Yes. He picked my pocket of a thousand dollars!"

Every eye was turned on the janitor, who returned their gaze with a smile of contempt.

"It's a lie!" he said.

"Simcoe Layton saw him do it, and compelled him to give up the money," said Sam.

"Is that so?" Pelton asked, turning to Layton.

"Yes," replied Layton.

"That settles it," said Pelton. "Cerberus, I am sorry for you, but you must go."

"But I won't go!" said Cerberus, doggedly.

"But you must!" said Pelton, firmly.

Cerberus only smiled.

"I think we are acting very hasty in the matter," said Arthur DeForrest. "We'd better leave it alone until the regular business meeting of the club."

"And let a pickpocket remain janitor?" demanded Sam.

"But Cerberus says he did nothing of the kind," said Arthur, by way of excuse for his action.

"You have the positive proof. Here is the money that was returned to me. If you dare to throw at me a hint that the charge is false, Arthur DeForrest, I'll put a head on you that—"

"Come, come, fellows!" exclaimed Pelton. "Let's have no quarreling among ourselves. We can settle this matter between ourselves without any further trouble."

"You have nothing to settle but the question of his discharge," said Sam, determinedly. "Whether you discharge him or not, he will go to prison for picking my pocket and attempting my life. I guess you will then be compelled to select some other one to perform his duties. Now, Sim, will you go for an officer?"

"Yes."

"Then do so, and I will keep him here until you come back."

Simcoe Layton left the room.

Cerberus trembled as he saw him leave. His bravado began to fail him.

"If I am arrested every one of you will be ruined," he said, glaring around at the young men in a very significant manner. Arthur DeForrest also paled, and trembled like a leaf.

"I will go your bail, Cerberus," he said to the janitor.

"If you do you will leave the club, or else I will," said Sam Jenkins.

"You can leave then, for I will not!" retorted Arthur, hotly.

"No, you will leave, for you will be expelled for taking sides with a pickpocket against a member of the club."

"Gentlemen," said Pelton, who apprehended a fight between the two young men, "there is no need that any bad blood be roused up in the matter—ah—here comes the officer."

Simcoe Layton entered the room with two stalwart policemen.

Cerberus sprang to his feet and made a flying leap across the room, clutching desperately at Sam Jenkins' throat.

"I'll kill you now, you infernal—"

"Bang!" went Sam's pistol, and Cerberus threw up his hands, clutched wildly at space, gasped, clutched his left breast convulsively, staggered half way across the room, back again, reeling like a drunken man, and dropped dead at the feet of his slayer.

CHAPTER XX.

IN SELF-DEFENSE.

One of the officers stooped over and examined him.

"Dear as a herring!" he said.

"I am sorry," remarked Sam, "but I would do it a dozen times over under similar circumstances."

"It was purely in self-defense," said Pelton.

"Yes—self-defense," added Arthur DeForrest, "and he deserved it. I congratulate you, Sam, on your lucky escape. He would have killed you if you had not fired when you did. It

was so sudden, and to the surprise of every member present, he rushed forward, grasped Sam by the hand, and wrung it with excessive cordiality.

Sam was somewhat surprised as he looked at Arthur.

He little thought of what a relief to him was the death of the crafty janitor.

Cerberus had long had him in his power, bleeding him regularly like a leech.

"Well," said the officer, looking at Sam, "while I'm of the opinion that you're not to blame, still, where a man has been killed, it's my duty to take you and let the judge discharge you."

"I am quite ready to go," said Sam. "Take the names of these witnesses."

"We'll go with you," said Pelton and the others, "and see that you have fairplay."

"Fairplay is a jewel," said the officer, "which every man ought to be able to wear. Jim, you remain here until somebody comes to relieve you."

"All right," said the second officer. "Go ahead!"

"Come," and taking Sam by the arm, he led the way down the stairs, followed by Charlie Pelton and other members of the club.

"Thank God, the rascal is dead!" muttered Arthur DeForrest, as he brought up the rear. "He bled me like a leech, and now I can breath free again. I'll stand by Sam now that it is not dangerous to do so."

At the stationhouse the officer told his story truthfully, which was corroborated by the others present.

Sam was placed in the captain's room for the night, and left in charge of an officer. Early the next morning his father was there to see him, accompanied by Nellie and Charlie Pelton.

"Oh, brother!" cried Nellie, throwing herself into his arms. "Had you heeded me and left that club when you signed the pledge this would never have happened."

"Tut-tut, Nellie!" replied Sam. "A man is liable to be attacked at any time in the streets of New York. Thieves, pickpockets and murderers are to be found everywhere in the city."

"Was this man a thief?" the elder Jenkins asked.

"Yes," said Charlie. "A regular pickpocket, which we didn't know till one of our fellows caught him going through Sam's pockets and made him give up the money."

"How much did he get?" the father asked.

"About a thousand dollars, I understood Layton to say."

"A thousand dollars!" exclaimed the old man, staring in surprise at Sam.

Sam paled and looked the other way to avoid his father's eye.

"How shall I account for that amount of money being in my pocket?" he asked himself, as he was conscious that his father would demand a statement as to where it came from.

Fortunately for him, just at that time an officer came in to take him before one of the court judges. His father accompanied him and furnished the bail that was required, which was merely nominal, on account of the evidence all being in Sam's favor.

Every member of the Merry Ten gathered around him and tendered him their congratulations. They took forcible possession of him, and carried him in triumph back to their clubhouse, whither they were followed by the elder Jenkins and his daughter.

It was Nellie's first visit to the clubrooms, and she took a deep interest in everything that she saw.

"Nicodemus," whispered Charlie Pelton to the colored waiter, and general mixer of drinks, "if you let that young lady, Miss Jenkins, get a peep at your bar downstairs, I will murder you!"

"Yes, sah, I understand," said the colored gentleman, and he showed a row of ivory that would have frightened a live pig.

"When they call for drinks, make two straight lemonades for Sam and I—and the same for the lady and her father, of course."

"Yes, sah!"

"Let everybody join us—what will you have, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Ahem—I will—ah—take a glass of lemonade."

"And you, Miss Jenkins, you will—"

"Take what father does," she quietly replied.

Sam and Charlie both took lemonade, while every other member of the club took champagne straight. In due time Nicodemus brought on the bottles and glasses, and the corks were drawn.

Nellie felt happy in seeing Sam and Charlie both call for lemonade instead of wine, as she could see that they had acquired courage, as she thought, to say no in response to their boon companions. On the other hand, the members all thought that Sam and Charlie were drinking the "Merry Ten Flipper," which would make one drunk quicker than even straight champagne.

Several songs were sung, and then the party broke up, Charlie Pelton accompanied Sam home, with Nellie on his arm.

"Charlie," said Nellie, "you can't imagine how glad I was when I saw you and brother drinking only lemonade."

"Why, you didn't think we would drink anything else, did you?" he asked.

"No, but I didn't think you would have managed it so well."

"Well, we call for lemonade every time."

On reaching home, the elder Jenkins ordered Sam to meet him in the library within five minutes, as he desired an interview with him.

"Charlie," whispered Sam to his friend, "remember that you loaned me a thousand dollars several days since, if the governor should ask you about it."

"All right, old fellow, and you can have another thousand if you want it."

Thus prepared to face the music, Sam repaired to the library, where he met his father.

"Sam," said his father, "I don't blame you for shooting that man in self-defense. That is a right that belongs to every one; but I want to know where you got that thousand dollars which he stole from you?"

"I borrowed it," replied Sam.

"Who from?"

"Charlie Pelton."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir."

A look of pain came into the old gentleman's face.

"Is it possible, Sam, that you presumed upon his engagement to your sister to borrow money from him?" he asked.

"No, sir. Charlie and I have often borrowed from each other long before he engaged himself to Nellie."

A long pause followed, during which time the old man gazed steadily at the glowing grate.

"What did you borrow that money for, Sam?" he finally asked.

"To pay debts with."

"Pay debts?"

"Yes, sir. I owed some half dozen debts that were due, so I borrowed the money from Charlie and paid them. I owe him the money yet, but he doesn't want it for a year."

"How much money have you now?"

"I don't know, sir—some few dollars I believe."

"When that is gone, what will you do, then?"

"I shall take your advice and go into business."

"But when?"

"Just as soon as I can fix upon something that is respectable, solid and profitable."

"Very good; but suppose you let me select a business for you, and—"

"I am now investigating a certain enterprise," interrupted Sam, "and when that is done I will lay all the facts before you."

The elder Jenkins looked at his son with a close, scrutinizing gaze, and thought he detected signs of dissipation about his eyes and face. A look of sadness came over him.

"My son," he said, "I am in much distress on your account. It is true you are now of age, but you are none the less dear to me. I am fearful of the company you keep. I am afraid you have already learned to gamble, and—"

"No, sir, not for money!" interrupted Sam quickly.

"But you will come to that sooner or later, as your associates all play. I have stopped your supply of money in the hope that I would induce you to go into business. But you seem to have no lack of cash for all your wants. Now you see what has come of your club association. You will go through life with the unpleasant thought that a man has died at your hands. Had you listened to your sister when you signed the pledge, and left the club, that killing would never have occurred. Now, I want you to promise me that you will sever your connection with that Merry Ten Club, and then I will pay every dollar of your debts. Will you do that?"

Sam hung his head, and thought for several minutes.

"Is it a bargain?" his father asked.

"I will do so as soon as I enter into business," the son answered, "as to leave it now would occasion a great deal of comment which I wish to avoid."

"I will hold you to that promise, my son," said the father, and they both arose to leave the room together. "But wait; I will give you a check for the money you owe Charlie. Give it to him, and let me know when you need more."

To the surprise of Sam, his father sat down and wrote out a check, payable to Charlie's order, for one thousand dollars, and handed it to him.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE JEWELRY BOX AGAIN.

On leaving his father, Sam went into the parlor, where Charlie was talking to Nellie.

"Come up to my room, Charlie," he said. "I won't keep you long. Don't get jealous, Nell, as it's only a little private business that we wish to settle between us."

Nellie laughed.

"You naughty fellow! I'll like to know if it isn't serious business to be engaged?"

"Of course it is, and business that demands the first attention," said Charlie, stealing an arm around the slender waist at his side. "You'll have to wait your turn, Sam, my dear boy."

"Oh, go on upstairs," said Nellie, pushing him away. "I know you are just dying to go."

Charlie kissed her, and whispered:

"I'll return in just three minutes, dear," and he darted out of the room, following Sam up two flights of stairs.

"By George, I played that game well," said Sam, laughing and showing him the check which his father had given him. "I told him I had borrowed a thousand dollars from you, and he gave me this check, payable to your order."

Charlie laughed heartily, and took the check.

"I will get it cashed and hand you the money," he said.

"It's a good joke on the old gentleman; but don't let Nellie know anything about it."

"Oh, no! She'll never appreciate the strategy that brought it about."

"Is this what you wanted to see me about?"

"Yes; you can go back to Nellie now. Give her my respects, and tell her she can always trust you with me."

"Where are you going?"

"Out for a walk. Come, go with me."

"Not now. Business before pleasure," and Charlie laughed in high glee.

"Business, eh?" said Sam. "Well, I guess you like the business, or you wouldn't stick so close to it."

Sam went out, leaving Charlie to pay court to the lovely Nellie, whom he loved dearly, notwithstanding the lemonade deception he was playing upon her.

Men have been deceivers ever.

Two or three hours he spent on Broadway, enjoying the sights to be seen there any pleasant afternoon. Suddenly he came across Harry Wilson.

"Hallo, Sam!" he exclaimed, in evident excitement. "Have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"The arrest of Simcoe Layton and Arthur DeForrest."

"The deuce! What were they arrested for?"

"Two detectives arrested them on information found in the diary which Cerebus had among his effects, in which he accuses them of certain crimes, with some kind of proofs which I don't know anything about. It is whispered that he has written something in it about you, and—Good God, man, what ails you? Are you ill?"

Sam staggered like a drunken man, ashen-hued and speechless for a minute or so. Harry caught him by the arm, and held him steady.

"I am all right now," he said, in a husky tone of voice. "Sudden news that's exciting serves me so."

"Take a glass of wine. It will do you good."

"No, I'll go home. I had hoped I would have no more trouble about Cerberus."

"Maybe you won't."

"But he has written something that will set the gossips talking, which is about the worst thing he could have done."

"Well, I am sorry. I must go downtown; won't you go with me?"

"No. I must go home," and so the two friends parted.

"By heavens!" muttered Sam, as soon as he was alone. "That rascal has written something that may cause my room to be searched. I must go home and get that box out of the way. Lord, what a volcano I am standing over."

He hastened back home as fast as he could walk, and passed directly up to his room. There he opened his trunk and took out the box which he had taken from Martha Perigorde on the night of that terrible tragedy. He wrapped it in a half dozen newspapers, and then started out of the room with it. A sudden thought came into his mind, and he went to the bureau, opened the top drawer, and took therefrom a false beard which corresponded admirably with his mustache. He had frequently used the beard to create fun among his associates. He put it on, and then took up the box and left the house.

He hurried away, taking a street car downtown.

Getting off near the post office, he went into a store, and purchased a leather valise large enough to hold the box.

Paying for the article, and putting the box therein, he went out upon the street again.

Where to go or what to do he knew not. Finally, he went to the Astor House, registered as "Samuel Jenckes, Ohio," and took a room.

"Make a good fire in the room," he ordered.

The fire was made, and Sam went to the room, locked and

bolted the door. To open the valise, take out the box and pour out its contents into the valise was but the work of a moment. He then cast the empty jewelry case into the fire, and saw it reduced to ashes.

"So far, so good," he muttered, and then, with the aid of his knife, he picked every diamond from its setting, leaving the gold in a little pile on the table.

"I'll throw the gold into the street. It will never be recognized as coming from the room or from my hands."

Slightly raising the window, he threw the pieces of gold out into the crowded street, one by one, and then closed it again.

"I will now leave everything here, and go back to the house. No one will think I am Sam Jenkins, nor will any one break into my valise to-night. If I go back and face the music, they will not suspect me in the absence of proof."

Locking the door, and taking the key with him, he went downstairs. Before leaving the room he destroyed the false beard, and stood again in his personal identity, in which character he went out and took an uptown car.

On reaching home, he was about to apply his night key to the door, when a man ran up the steps, and asked:

"Are you Mr. Sam Jenkins?"

"Yes, that's my name," he replied.

"Then you are my prisoner, sir."

"On what grounds, if I may ask?"

"This," and he showed the badge of a detective, as he was joined by another man.

"But what am I charged with?"

"That you will know in good time. Do you surrender?"

"Of course, for I've done nothing I am ashamed of."

"Very well. Now lead the way to your room, please."

"Certainly, sir," and Sam applied the key and opened the door.

Nellie met them in the hall.

"Oh, brother!" she cried, running forward and throwing her arms about his neck, "those two men came here two hours ago to arrest you. What have you done?"

"Nothing—absolutely nothing, Nellie, dear; do not be alarmed. They wish to search my room, I presume—so come along with us."

Nellie went upstairs with them, and, sure enough, a vigorous search was made. His trunk, drawers and every pocket were searched, but nothing was found that gave any satisfaction to the two detectives. They searched him from head to foot.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing," said one detective to the other.

"Not a thing," said the other.

"Well, I am still a prisoner, then?"

"No—you are free."

"Very well, then, you are my prisoners," and Sam very quietly drew a revolver, which they had left with him, and cocked it.

"What do you mean, sir?" one of them asked, in surprise.

"I mean that you are my prisoners. You have searched my room without cause. Now you will go with me to the police headquarters, or shall I call assistance?"

"Look here, young man," said the elder of the two detectives, "you go slow now," and leaning forward he whispered something in his ear which Nellie could not catch. But she saw Sam turn ashen-hued, and stagger back against the wall, gasping out wildly:

"'Tis false—false as Hades!"

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE TOILS AGAIN—THE NARROW ESCAPE.

"Brother—brother!" cried Nellie, rushing to his side. "What is it? Tell me, brother."

"No, no! It's false! Take it back; or you shall die the death of a dog!" and pushing Nellie aside, he rushed upon the detective and pressed the muzzle of his revolver against his breast.

"Would you kill me and be hung just because I accused you of killing another?" coolly asked the detective, looking blandly in his face.

Sam glared fiercely at him.

"I am reckless—retract or die!"

"Well, as it is much more pleasant to retract than to die, I will retract," said the detective.

"Now, leave my room, both of you!"

Nellie, in her great excitement had opened the window for air. She saw two policemen across the street. She darted out of the room, flew down the stairs, and opened the front door.

"Police—police!" she screamed, and the two knights of the locust ran across the street to the house.

"What's the row?" one of them asked, on reaching her side.

"Arrest these two men!" cried Sam, from the top of the first flight of stairs.

The two officers rushed up the stairs and collared the two detectives.

"Hands off!" said one of them, showing his badge, and the policeman instantly released him.

"Do you know that man personally?" Sam asked of the policeman.

"No, but he's a detective."

"No such thing—arrest him—he is a fraud. I will stand between you and danger."

"I guess we had better all go to the stationhouse and have this matter settled," said one of the police.

"Yes, that's right. Take 'em along. I'll go with you."

They all five went to the stationhouse, where it turned out that they were really genuine detectives, who, acting on the hint they had received from the mysterious diary of Cerberus, had arrested Sam, thinking they would find positive proof among his effects.

Sam at once instituted a suit for damages, retaining a distinguished member of the bar to conduct his case.

Night came on, and Sam concluded to go back to the Astor House to see if his effects there had been tampered with. On the way down, he met Charlie Pelton, who told him that Arthur DeForrest had committed suicide after being arrested, and for the sake of his family and friends, the charge against him had been suppressed.

Pelton went his way, and Sam continued on toward the general postoffice. Suddenly the thought occurred to him that he had better get another false beard before going back to the Astor House. He crossed over to the Bowery, bought one from a costumer, put it on, and went his way.

He found that his valise had not been touched by any one, and felt greatly relieved.

That night he took a carriage and drove to Layton's residence in search of Simcoe, but Sim had left to go downtown.

Sam dismissed the carriage and walked toward the clubhouse. Layton was there.

"I have been up to see you, but you were out," Sam remarked as he shook hands with his friend. "I wanted to see you."

"What's up now?"

"I want to propose that you and I go to Europe for a year. The occurrences of the last few days have made it very uncomfortable for me, and I doubt not it is the same with you."

"Yes, very uncomfortable. There seems to be a shadow hanging over me, go where I will. When do you propose to go?"

"In ten days."

"I will be ready by that time, but how much money will we need for the trip?"

"I don't know. I will arrange for a good supply before we start, however."

Then they sat down to cards and played several hours. Sam, and nearly every member of the club present, as well as several visitors, drank deeply of the famous lemonade, now well known as the Merry Ten Flipper, until he was very much intoxicated. As the hour of midnight came and passed, the visitors went away, leaving the Merry Ten to continue their revelry. Suddenly a terrific storm came up and swept over the city with tremendous fury. The wind howled like so many demons, shaking windows and doors as if anxious to break in. The games lagged, and members who could not go out in the storm, leaned back in their easy chairs, smoked, talked and dozed.

Sam, who was full of the famous Flipper decoction, sat still, as if asleep, his head leaning back against the high-backed chair. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a howl of terror, his hair on end, eyes protruding, glaring at something which seemed to pass before him.

"There! There!" he screamed, pointing around the room. "Look! There she goes, with the blood-stained clothes! No, no! Not me! Not me! Off—off, spirit of h—ll! Off, I say," and seizing a chair, he hurled it across the room with such terrific force as to utterly demolish it against the wall of the room. The next moment Simcoe Layton sprang up and screamed with terror. But instead of showing fight, he buried his face in his hands and sunk down in his seat again.

Charlie Pelton, and some of the half dozen others sprang upon Sam and secured him from doing any further damage.

The storm raged all night, so several had to remain at the clubhouse, among them Pelton and Sam, both the worse for what they had drank. But when morning came they were sober enough to go to barber shops to bathe and otherwise get rid of the appearance of having gone through an all night's debauch.

All through the day Sam and Charlie kept out of the way of Nellie Jenkins. She would have noticed the signs of dissipation and asked many annoying questions.

The ten days passed, and the time came for Sam and Layton to take leave of their friends. Nobody but a few friends outside the club knew that they were going to Europe. The elder Jenkins had agreed to pay Sam's expenses in order to have him cut loose from the Merry Ten club.

Sam bid them adieu at home, and took the carriage for the clubhouse, where he was to meet Layton and a number of friends before going on board the steamer.

Of course, the usual parting glasses were drunk, speeches made, and songs sung. Midnight came, and the parting bumper was called for. It was drank, and then the two friends left the clubhouse, entered the carriage—their baggage having been sent on board during the day—and were driven down to the pier where the steamer lay.

Just as Simcoe alighted from the carriage a tall man stepped forward, and said:

"Once more before you go, Simcoe Layton."

"Yes; with the greatest of pleasure," exclaimed Layton, and the next moment two bright, glittering blades flashed and crossed each other in the gaslight. The hour was so late that there were no persons about, save a few on the deck of the steamer. The astonished driver looked on in petrified amazement.

"Stop this—off with that mask, you cow——"

"You keep still!" hissed some one behind him, and Sam looked around him to find another man in a mask leveling a pistol at his head.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MASKED MAN AGAIN AND THE DOUBLE TRAGEDY.

Sam had his pistol in his hand, and believing that the man in the mask intended to fire, he quickly raised his weapon and fired full at the mask.

The man staggered backward, and let his pistol fall to the ground. Sam snapped a cap at him, and then the man, with a bitter curse on his lips, turned and fled away in the darkness.

The shot caused Simcoe Layton to spring aside, thinking that he was attacked from behind.

That move was a fatal one to him.

The mask sprang forward and plunged his knife to the hilt in Layton's breast, who staggered away like a drunken man.

The mask then uttered a triumphant laugh, and turned to fly.

Crack! went Sam's revolver, and the man leaped forward, reeled a moment, and then gathered himself for another start.

Crack! went the revolver again, and up went both his hands, grasping at space.

"Give him another, boss!" cried the driver, standing up in his seat. "Your partner is down!"

Crack! went another shot, and the man in the mask gave a groan as he sank to the ground.

"Now, we'll see who and what you are!" said Sam, putting up his weapon and advancing toward the mysterious individual.

Just then two policemen and several persons from the steamer came running up.

"Two dead men and one live one," said the policeman. "I'll take you in, sir."

"Very well," said Sam, "only I wish you had come earlier."

The other policeman went to the man in the mask.

"Why, this man has on a mask!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes," said Sam. "There were two of them. They attacked us the moment we stepped out of the carriage. My God! Sim is down! Is he dead?" and rushing to the prostrate body of Layton, he knelt by his side and turned the face up so that he could see his features.

He was dead.

"At last!" exclaimed Sam, sadly, "as brave a heart as ever beat in the breast of man, slain by the masked shadow that has so long followed him. Oh, Sim—Sim, my friend!"

"Who was he?"

"A man—a friend—Simcoe Layton!" he replied, "who was to have sailed in yonder steamer to-morrow morning."

The driver then told the whole story of the attack and the killing.

The two dead bodies were taken up and carried away—the masked one to the morgue, for identification, and young Layton's to the residence of his father. Sam was carried to the stationhouse and locked up for the night.

"Oh, heavens!" he suddenly exclaimed, "my baggage is on board the steamer, and may be seized and searched. The money and those diamonds may give me away altogether, since Cerberus' diary has directed suspicion toward me! I must get that baggage away—officer—here—officer!"

"What's wanted, sir?" asked an officer, appearing at the door of the room in which he was confined.

"I will give you one hundred dollars if you will bring me Charles Pelton, No. — Forty-second street within an hour. Give him my name and tell him to come to me at once."

"I'll send a man for him, sir," said the officer.

In less than an hour Charlie walked into the room with:

"Sam, what the devil does all this mean?"

"It means that poor Sim is dead," said Sam, with tears in his eyes, "and I am here for killing the man in the mask, who has been shadowing him so long."

"Where did this happen?"

"Just as we alighted from the carriage to go to the steamer, two masked men followed us. I opened fire on one of them, who ran away. The other stabbed Sim, and started to run, when I brought him down with three shots."

"You had a witness in the driver, did you not?"

"Yes, and he has told a story to the officers that tallies exactly with my own."

"Then you are safe, so far as the law is concerned."

"Yes, but I want you to go down to the steamer, get my baggage, and send my trunk home, and my valise carry to your own room to keep until I call for it. Let no one touch it."

"Certainly I will do that, only you must give me an order for the baggage, you know."

"Get me paper, pen and ink, and I will write it."

Charlie left the room, and soon returned with writing material, which he had laid on the little deal table before him. Charlie took the order and left.

He went to the steamer and presented the order.

The clerk told him that the baggage would be delivered early on the morrow.

He then went away to visit the home of poor Simcoe Layton. He found the family plunged into the wildest excess of grief over the death of the only son of the household.

The grief-stricken father came forward and shook him by the hand, saying:

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Pelton, as my son loved you as a brother. But I shall never believe otherwise than that my poor boy's death resulted, indirectly, from his connection with that Merry Ten club."

"I am sure you think so, sir," said Charlie, "for I am sure every member was his friend, and would have fought for him as Sam Jenkins did to-night."

"There is no doubt of that," said the father, "but his association there led him into excesses that eventually led to the feud in which he lost his life. Had he gone into business, as I tried to persuade him to do, and visited the public libraries instead of social clubs, he would not have been a murdered man to-night. But I do not blame you or any member of the club. On the contrary, I am especially grateful to Mr. Jenkins, and would like to go on his bail bond to-morrow, should a bond be required of him."

"This is another shadow on the club," muttered Charlie, as he slowly walked along the street at a very late hour. "Poor Arthur DeForrest a suicide, and now Simcoe Layton murdered. Nellie must be right about it. Social clubs are more or less inseparable from dissipation, and dissipation never fails to bring a train of evils in its wake. I declare, I can hardly look her in the face again after all that has happened. But I am in no wise responsible for it, as I am not mixed up in any of those tragedies. I wonder what Sam will say when he hears that Sim's father said?"

Charlie retired to his bachelor apartments and snatched a few hours of sleep.

The Jenkins family had been awakened just before daylight, and informed that Sam was in the stationhouse for killing the man who slew Simcoe Layton. The elder Jenkins at once repaired to the residence of the Laytons, and there learned the true story.

"Thank God, my boy is not to blame for this!" fervently muttered the old man, "though it seems that some fatal shadow has fallen across his path. This is the second man he has been compelled to slay in the last month. I can trace

the cause to no other course than the associations that have grown out of that social club."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

At an early hour the next morning Charlie Pelton took a carriage and went down to the steamer to get Sam's trunk and valise.

To his supreme astonishment he found two detectives there, who seized the baggage as soon as it was placed on the dock.

"What does this mean?" he asked, indignantly.

"It means that this baggage will be searched before you get it," replied the detective.

"Why do you wish to search it?"

"We are looking for something that will give us certain clews."

"Well, I can't help myself, of course. When will you be through searching the baggage?"

"We will take it to the Central station and make the search there."

"Very well—you will let me go with you?"

"Yes; but I don't know that you will be permitted to witness the search."

"You will not give my friend any show at all, then."

"I don't know what they will do yet. Come on."

They drove to the Central police station, where the trunk was searched by an expert in such business.

Charlie was permitted to stand by and see it.

Nothing was found in his trunk to create suspicion.

"Now, look into the valise," said the chief of the detective force.

The little bunch of skeleton keys were tried until one was found that would unlock the valise.

In it were many little toilet articles such as a refined man would carry on his travels.

In the bottom was found a number of unset stones and packages of greenbacks.

Charlie Pelton glanced at it and buried his face in his hands and groaned.

"What do you know about this, sir?" the chief of detectives asked, as he took up the rare diamonds, pearls and money, and looked at Charlie.

"Nothing whatever, sir. I am dumfounded, but can't believe that my friend and classmate is guilty of any crime."

"This is very good proof of guilt. We have suspected Mr. Jenkins ever since that man Cerberus left his diary behind him. It is all up with your friend, sir."

Charlie Pelton hung his head and wept, for he grieved for Sam, for Nellie, and himself.

"Oh, it will kill her!" he moaned, in the deepest anguish. "My God! It is awful! But then I know that Sam can explain this away—he is not—cannot be a murderer."

Charlie went away, and tried to see Sam to tell him, but was not allowed to see him.

John Perigorde was sent for. He identified the diamonds, etc., and the bills as those belonging to himself and wife.

He broke down and wept like a child, for his good name was saved, and the murderer would be brought to justice.

The news spread like wildfire, and ere Sam himself had heard of it, his family had been made acquainted with the facts.

Nellie and her mother fainted dead away, and the father swore that the whole thing was false.

Sam was searched, and everything taken from him. He was

then loaded down with chains, and told that he was the murderer of Martha Perigorde.

"That's a lie!" said Sam, "but I see how it is," his quick wit coming to his aid. "We caught the murderer and made him give up his booty, letting him go free on condition that he let us have the money and jewels."

"Who was the murderer?"

"One of those masked men that we killed last night."

But it was proved at the trial that the mysterious masked man who had followed Simcoe Layton with such fatal pertinacity, was a relative of poor Adele Heron, who had sworn to avenge her wrongs with his own hands. He kept his oath at the sacrifice of his life.

The great wealth of the elder Jenkins enabled Sam to employ the best legal talent in the country, and so hotly did they contest the charge of murder, that the jury brought in a verdict of murder in the second degree.

He was sentenced to fifteen years in the penitentiary.

It was a terrible blow to the family.

Nellie bore it bravely—taking leave from him only as a true sister would have done.

Going to her desolate home, she wrote to Charlie Pelton:

"My heart is broken—for in losing a brother I have lost more than a brother—my heart's idol. You will not wish to wed the sister of a convict—therefore, I release you from your engagement to me. May you ever be as happy as I am now miserable."

"Your ever faithful,
"Nellie."

This she sealed and mailed.

The next morning Charlie Pelton called at the home of the Jenkins.

"Nellie," he said, as the pale and trembling girl approached him, "you are still my own—my heart will not give you up. I will marry you in spite of all the ills that could befall you."

With a glad cry, she sprang into his arms.

They were married the next month, and are now in their beautiful home in the west.

The Merry Ten club disbanded, for the dark shadows that overhung it could not be endured. It is now a thing of the past. Some of its members are in distant lands. But poor Sam Jenkins, as he toils in his prison, never ceases to ponder on the shadows of a social club.

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